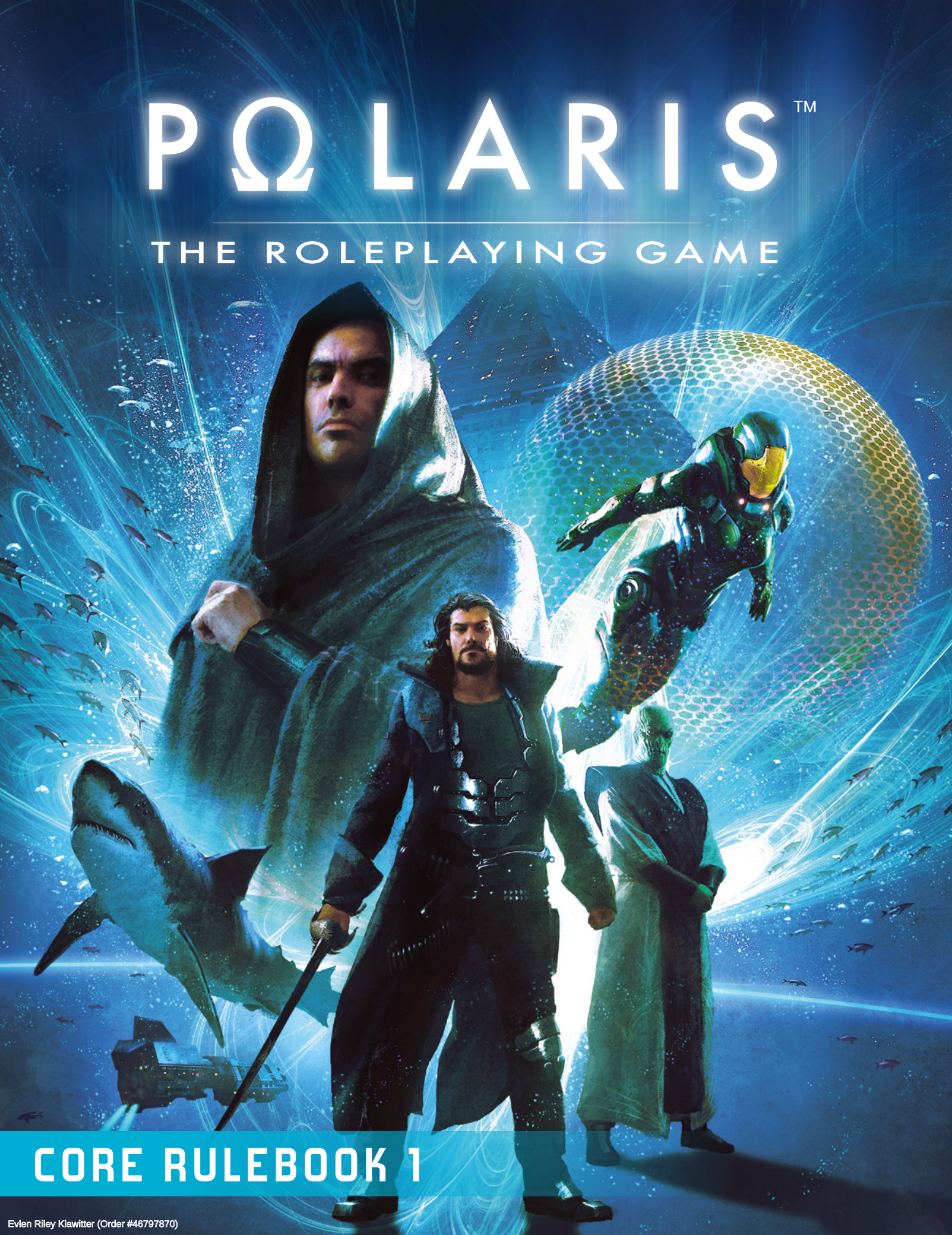
POLARIS™

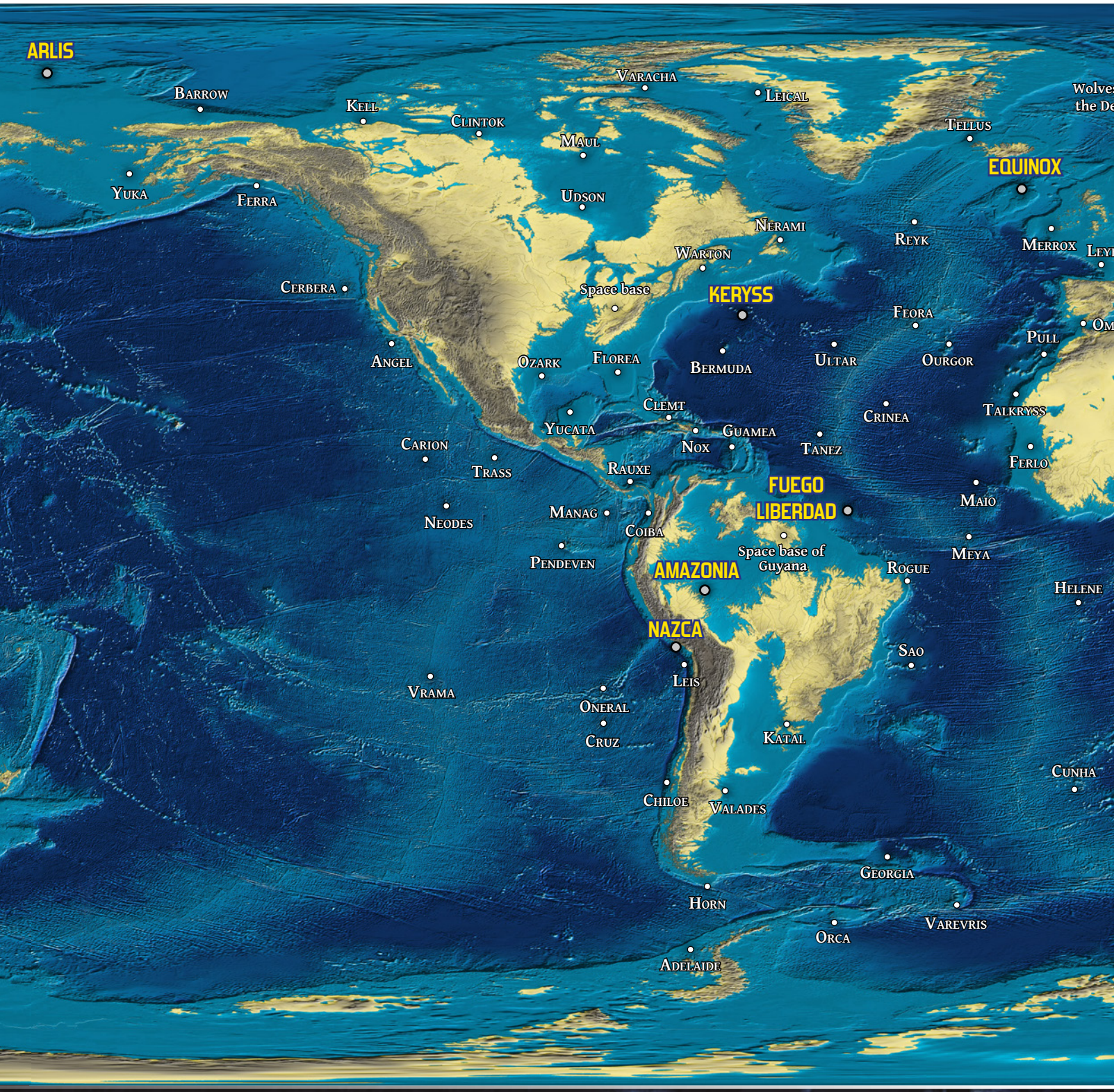
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME



CORE RULEBOOK 1

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

THE WORLD OF THE DEEP -



CAPTIONS

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- CAPITAL CITIES

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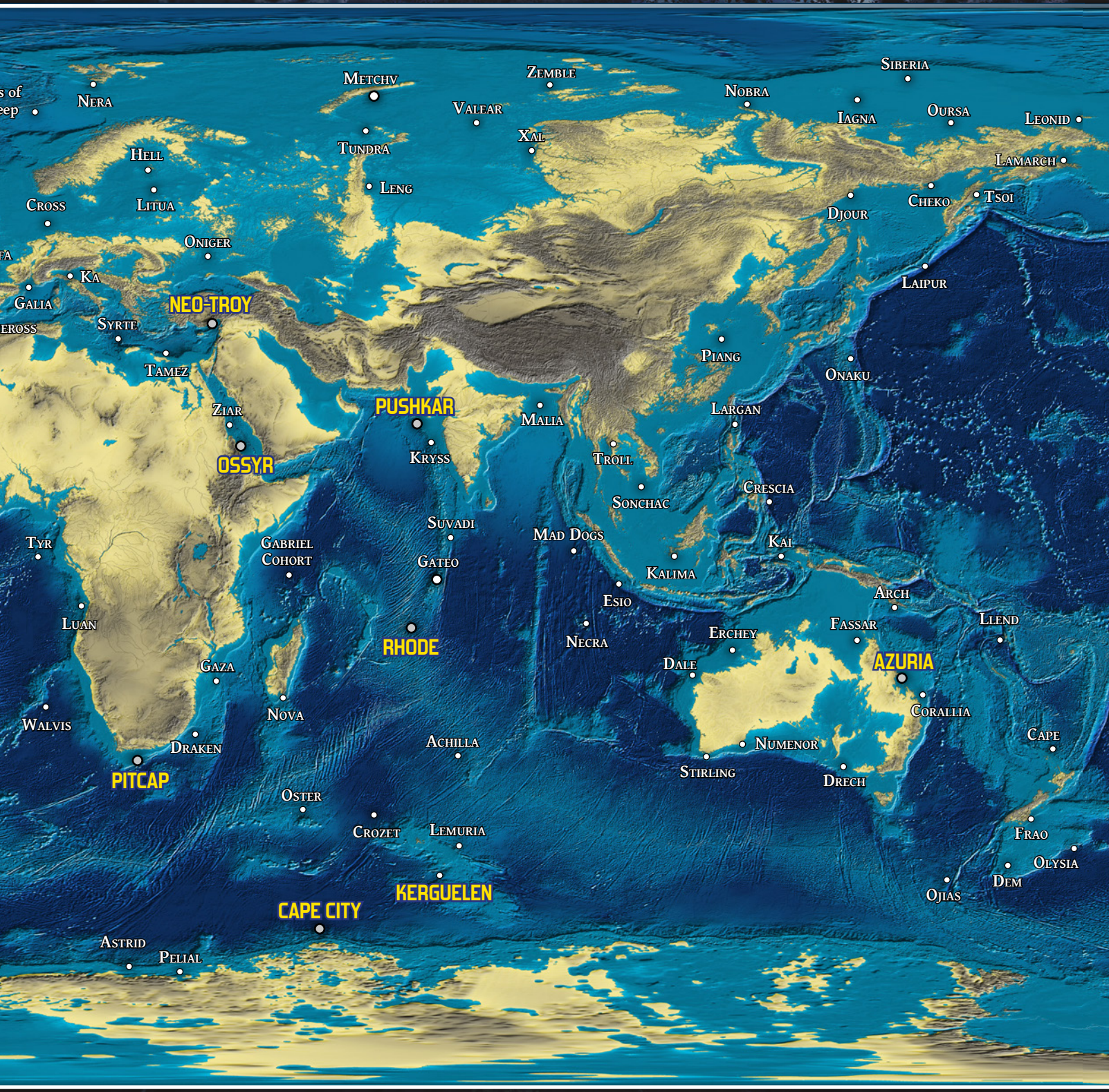
COMMUNITIES & CITIES



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Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

POLARIS™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

CORE RULEBOOK: 1

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Polaris RPG - Core Rulebook: 2.
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PREFACE

Welcome to the *Polaris RPG*. This universe's "Big Bang" dates back to 1996. Today, more than 20 years after its inception, Polaris comes back to the surface—what better analogy for a game taking place underwater.

The *Polaris RPG* was inspired by many different works, be they literary, audiovisual, or other games. *Dune, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Battletech, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Battlestar Galactica, Cosmos 1999, The Hunt for Red October*, *Abyss*, and *Crimson Tide* have all been inspirational in the creation of this game. I should also mention a few post-apocalyptic roleplaying games, such as *Aftermath, the Morrow Project,* and *Gamma World.*

Paradoxically, the *Polaris RPG* was originally supposed to take place aboveground, in a ravaged world. The adventurers would have roamed the world in powerful combat armor, seeking depots from forsaken times. The underwater element was only supposed to be secondary. However, very quickly, the idea of developing an original sub-marine universe prevailed. Pushed forward by Guillaume Gille-Naves from *Halloween Concept*, the first edition of the *Polaris RPG* was on its way.

A second edition followed, but the *Polaris RPG* barely survived for the next few years, due to economic problems and a rather arduous game system. The game was supported by a few die-hard fans whose enthusiasm kept me, fortunately, from archiving this large project. A new page was turned with **Black Book Edition**'s decision to refloat the Polaris ship. Today, that French publisher is giving us the opportunity to make it available in English.

So, when developing a universe like Polaris, you must deal with two major issues when it comes to designing the game's rules: the vast diversity of technology to which the characters have access, and, above all, the water! Playing under the water, when the characters are not safe inside a station, causes some serious difficulties. Everything becomes more complicated: communications, pressure problems, the darkness, and more. These led directly to the game system complexity in the first two editions. Furthermore, I lacked the basic scientific knowledge required to explain various elements of the underwater world. More knowledgeable associates would, on occasion, point out that one of the ships in the game could never actually work underwater. That 'breach in the game's hull' was plugged by its strong second pillar, François "Iron" Menneteau, who is now its co-author.

Although the technical side of things seemed secondary to some, to me it was an essential part of making the universe coherent. A world built on solid foundations makes more sense, even to those who don't have a PhD in submarine physics. Once François Menneteau's work had provided these foundations, by redefining all of the "real world" technological aspects, what remained was the need for a more accessible rules system. This task was given to Raphaël Bombayl (you can read his postscript at the end of this book).

Last, but not least, we also had to take into account the many new underwater technologies that are currently being developed. A lot has changed since 1996 in the fields of communications, energy sources, underwater breathing, and supercavitation. Today, there is talk of torpedoes that can reach speeds of up to 250 kph underwater, and DARPA is working on a vessel that can match that speed. There are plans to fit Phalanx batteries to submarines. Acoustic walls are being developed that could destroy enemy torpedoes. The Australians have developed a device that allows us to breathe the oxygen contained in water. We have invented prototypes of vessels that could ride on electromagnetic beams, and we have even managed to shoot a dart faster than the speed of sound. In many ways, modern science has surpassed what was recently speculative fiction.

With a solid technological base, a new system, a new layout, and the inclusion of the latest submarine technologies of our time, you now have in your hands the result of a huge amount of work. We hope this new edition of the *Polaris RPG* will conquer the hearts of even the most dubious.

As for the historical base of the game, it hasn't changed all that much; it has just been adapted. We didn't want newer Players to enter this world without having all of the essential elements in hand. However, Polaris is not a world frozen in time; a coming series of supplements and novels will be added to keep it evolving. The Coral Republic, the Orbital Alliance, Amazonia, or the Mediterranean Union are just a few of the surprises that you will be able to explore in the near future.

Already, with this book, you have a vast opportunity for myriad adventures, as the *Polaris RPG* is not only about the water. It is even possible to play without ever getting your characters' feet wet. From the mysteries of the Surface to the Depths of the earth, the political intrigues, the espionage, or the many different types of trafficking, there is room for one and all in the shadow of the Geneticians.

Voila! I sincerely hope that you will be delighted with this English-language edition of the game, that it will inspire you to explore with us the many complex aspects of this underwater world, this world without sunlight, where oxygen is the most precious of elements and where humanity does what it does the best: survive.

Have a good read and a good game!

—Philippe Tessier

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

Eryan couldn't feel anything anymore. Encased in his metal exo-armor, he was slowly sinking into the ocean's darkness. The shock had been so tremendous that he was barely conscious. The operation was supposed to go without a snag.

Well, he had been told never to work for a great nation, even if in theory the mission was risk-free. Missions offered by the great nations were never really risk-free. In fact, looking back, this one really was quite dangerous. In this case, however, it wasn't for the usual reasons. He hadn't been asked to go up to the hellish conditions of the surface and explore mysterious ruins crawling with awful mutant creatures, each more terrifying than the next. He hadn't been given a mission located in the depths of the earth, haunted by Burrowers. He hadn't been asked to explore a shipwreck at 18,000 meters down being used as a field base by Felorms or by Protei. His mission wasn't even about investigating the actions of a group of smugglers, shutting down a network of slave traders, or uncovering the secrets of a large pharmaceutical group.

No, in this case, he only had to test pilot a new vessel for the Mediterranean Union, an ultra-cavitation fighter capable of maneuvering underwater as well as in the air. The Union had no intention of endangering the lives of its own precious pilots, and had therefore hired mercenaries to do the job.

It is true that he almost had problems from the get-go. Boarding a Union ship-launcher battleship with a spy camera wasn't the smartest idea he'd ever had. However, the Admiral had been quite understanding and overlooked the incident. After all, who wasn't working for at least three nations nowadays? This would not prevent Eryan, assuming he was going to make it, from selling the information he had gathered to the highest bidder. He had at least a dozen contacts ready to pay a lot of money to know what he had seen on the Mediterranean ship.

Now that he thought about it, Eryan remembered having a sense of foreboding as he climbed into the cockpit. But he hadn't had much time to think about it since then. A few minutes later, the battleship had stabilized its position, then slightly inclined up and ejected the fighter vessel from one of its launch tubes.

Eryan recalled the extraordinary acceleration of his ship, which had instantly formed a supercavitation bubble upon contact with water. Then the jet drive had kicked in and the craft had sailed like an arrow toward the surface. What a stupendous feeling it had been!

He would never forget the moment his fighter vessel shot out of the water like a cannon ball and he had found himself contemplating the blinding sky. It was a beautiful sphere of unparalleled brightness, painted with the many intense colors of an artist's palette.

After a short minute of wonderment, he stabilized his craft's altitude in order to start his testing maneuvers. Several observation submarines had deployed targets on the surface while officers, protected by their armors, kept an eye on the craft's progress. That's when things took a turn for the worse!

***

Inside the cockpit, an ear-splitting alarm informed Eryan that several missiles had locked on him. From his viewpoint he could distinctly see the white contrails rising from the ocean's surface. The situation promised to be difficult, but, after all, they had hired him because he could handle it. Eryan had once been an ace pilot in the Red League's military. It would take more than a few missiles to impress him. However, he hadn't taken into account that the hybrid experimental craft he was piloting hadn't been designed with atmospheric performance as a priority.

He deployed some lures and dropped into a breathtaking dive, pulling out just above the water surface. That was when he had the surprise of a lifetime! Right in front of him as he was brushing the surface of the calm sea, he saw something incredible!

The sea seemed to rise as a ship's bow pierced the surface and fired a missile salvo at the observation submarines. Eryan had never seen anything like this vessel. The ship, rising from the sea at an angle of 45°, was actually changing as it dropped back to the surface in a deluge of sea foam. Its sides were moving down under the hull to enable the ship to sail like a surface vessel, revealing a deck and several gun batteries. No one possessed such technology. No one since the Empire of the Geneticians.

Eryan managed to avoid the ship at the last moment by pulling up into a chandelle maneuver. A missile exploded nearby as the fighter rose toward the sky. Eryan had lost control of the vehicle. He triggered the ejection function and soon after that found himself hanging from a burning parachute. During the short moment when the burning chute slowed his fall, he witnessed the destruction of the Union submarines by the enemy ship's naval cannons. Then he dropped like a stone...

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Had it not been for his exo-armor, Eryan would already be dead. Now that he was slowly sinking down into the abyss, he thought it might have been better if he had died. He had no idea how deep the ocean was where he had fallen, and he didn't know what pressure his survival armor could withstand either.

He had been sinking for a long time already. He cast a worried glance at the information displayed on his visor. Holy cow! Four thousand meters maximum operating depth! The Mediterranean Union certainly didn't expect their pilots to sink in very deep trenches. He looked through the display to find the exo-armor's equalization value and realized he had to compensate for 30 kilograms to stop sinking toward

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the seabed. Without any propulsion system he could only hope to have some ballast, which was confirmed by the onboard computer.

"Thirty kilogram positive ballast equalization," he managed to say.

"Voice command malfunction," the computer replied in a charming female voice.

Swearing, Eryan tried to move his arms. He hadn't broken anything, and the exoskeleton seemed functional. On the other hand, he was already at a depth of 2,000 meters and couldn't see a thing. So he had to find the backup controls on his forearm by touch alone. He found the switch controlling the two small spotlights fixed to his helmet.

There was only darkness around him, and like a light fallen from the firmament he was sinking in this seemingly endless obscurity. The first alarm notified him that he had reached 3,000 meters. He raised his forearm to his helmet and started typing in a frenzy to activate the ballast controls.

"Ballast equalization initiated," said the computer.

"Equalization complete."

Eryan sighed... but his relief was short-lived as the depth gauge indicated he was still sinking.

"Equalization is impossible," the computer explained. "Ballast is nonoperational."

Eryan cursed at his bad luck. What had become of the world if the Mediterranean Union couldn't manufacture shock-resistant exo-armors?

He kept sinking... 3,500 meters depth. He couldn't swim with this armor, not with those extra 30 kilos that were inevitably dragging him down into the abyss.

At 3,600 meters, he tried to remember his best memories and realized he didn't have many good ones.

At 3,700 meters, he thought about a young woman in Equinox with whom he had spent a few pleasant hours, but then he remembered that he'd later turned her in to the Watchers, and that she'd only spent that time with him because he paid her.

At 3,800 meters, he thought about his fellow adventurers he was about to join in the Flux of the other world.

At 3,900, he really wondered what was the ship that had shot him down. A Genetician ship? Only they were capable of developing that kind of technology. A vessel modifying its structure to sail on the surface? No one had ever seen that.

At 4,000 meters, the sound of the alarm stirred him out of his thoughts. From now on, he could do nothing but wait for the pressure to crush his exoskeleton's structure. With such a light frame, the structure would begin to warp at 4,400 meters and everything would be over by the time he reached a maximum depth of 4,800 meters. His death would be swift...

At 4,100 meters, he saw a long shape circling around him. If he had been noticed by an underwater predator, he hoped that the creature would at least wait for his exo-armor to implode.

At 4,200 meters, he realized the controls to his oxygen mix were still operational. He modified the mix because he wanted to die happy. It was quite stupefying that this control, which was barely ever used with pressurized exo-armors, was the only one that was still actually working.

At 4,300 meters, he started to laugh wholeheartedly as he imagined the faces of those that he owed a lot of money to when they learned about his death.

At 4,400 meters exactly, the crack and snap sounds started, and he lamented that physics was always horribly accurate and wished it could be wrong just this once.

At 4,500 meters, he landed on the sedimentary seabed.

It took him a while to realize that he was still alive and wasn't sinking anymore. He balanced his oxygen back to normal and tried to stand up. His feet sank in the sand but he managed to keep himself upright.

Good. He was alive, but he was lost in the middle of the ocean and something was telling him that the Mediterranean Union wasn't going to worry about him anytime soon. He glanced at his oxygen reserve. Less than an hour left. He then wondered if his armor was equipped with a distress beacon... Yes, indeed, but it was defective. It had been made by the League, judging by its specifications...

Eryan sighed. Tough luck... but then wasn't that just the story of his life? He didn't know what else to do, so he started walking slowly. He couldn't even enjoy the view. There was only darkness around him and his every step raised a cloud of sand that obscured his vision even more.

He walked like that for for the las hour of his oxygen. It was getting harder to breathe. He dropped down to his knees. As he started to feel the effects of oxygen deprivation, he heard the familiar sound of an emergency oxygen reserve starting in his exo-armor. The air felt like an elixir of happiness. He breathed deeply then stood up to resume his pointless walk.

He advanced two or three more steps, then stopped. In front of him was a wall, and engraved into it was a carved symbol, an eye embedded inside the omega letter. He was wondering whether he was hallucinating but the obstacle felt real when he touched it. What was this wall doing here? Topographical surveys for this region didn't indicate any structures in the area, yet there was one right in front of him. He was taking a closer look at the symbol, when the wall suddenly opened and he stepped back. He was so surprised that he lost his balance and fell backward.

As the wall was opening, Eryan was bathed in a blinding light originating from the structure. He stood up with difficulty and hesitated. After all, what did he have to lose? He was going to die anyhow if he stayed underwater much longer.

He advanced towards the light and... lost consciousness.

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When he came around, Eryan was lying down on the same sandy seabed he had landed on after his long dive in the abyss. It had all been a hallucination. He had probably passed out before his emergency oxygen reserve kicked in. Utterly discouraged, he decided to just sit there and wait for Death to come to him. He sure as hell wasn't going to go out of his way to meet it halfway.

After all, Death wasn't far: an enormous eye, level with the sand, opened a few meters from him. Eryan raised an eyebrow. Nothing could surprise him anymore. The bulging eye rotated in its orbit to look for predators, then stared at its prey. The creature slowly squirmed out of its hideout by shaking off the sand that covered its body; it was like an enormous conger eel, but of a kind that was extremely terrifying. It must have been about six meters long and its huge maw was filled with long, sharp teeth that could easily crush a suit of armor to "squeeze out the meat." Eryan started laughing. It reminded him of the rare occasions when he had eaten a crab. The creature was going to do the same exact thing to him.

The monster approached slowly. It opened its maw wide... and closed it instantly. Actually, it was more like something had closed it from the outside, a kind of huge spike that popped up from the sand. Eryan had a hard time seeing what happened next because a great cloud of sand exploded from the seafloor when whatever was attached to the spike came out of its hiding place. The thing attacking the giant fish must have been some sort of giant spider, but it was difficult to be sure on account of all the sediment in the water.

Anyway, Eryan couldn't care less. He was out of oxygen and he was about to die. Who cared whether he was devoured by a fish or a crustacean? He let himself fall over onto his back and barely had time to catch sight of the lights that floated by above him before he passed out once again.

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"Your story's incredible," whispered one of the burly fellows sitting at Eryan's table in an Equinox bar.

"Yet, I swear every word of it is true!" Eryan said while emptying his glass.

"Wait, who were those guys who saved you?"

"Oh! They were hunting this spider in the area. They told me they'd never have found it without me. All thanks to my armor's distress beacon."

"Hold on! Didn't you say it wasn't working?" grumbled one of the other fellows. "You're bullshitting us!"

"No, I swear, I..."

Eryan didn't get a chance to finish his sentence. The men he had told his story to had finished their drinks in one gulp, then stood up and left.

The miraculous survivor sat alone at his table, staring into the bottom of his glass.

"I'm sure my beacon was dead," he said to himself... "There was no signal, nothing. I'm not crazy..."

Eryan shook his head.

"Hey, who knows? Maybe I am nuts and I imagined all of it."

He stood up, left the bar, and lost himself in the streets of the fluctuating city. Ever since he had been saved, he'd been telling his story to anyone who was willing to listen, but no one ever believed him. Even his regular contacts thought he was bonkers. So he started to drink and spend his time in the slums. He actually tried to gather a crew to get back into business, but everyone avoided him. His story wasn't the only thing that made people mistrust him. He had the feeling that something or someone was persuading everyone not to do business with him.

In fact, he had actually noticed another strange element since his bizarre adventure—there seemed to be a guardian angel looking after him. Whereas before this incident he had been rather unlucky, it was incredible that, since then, he'd been able to spend so much time in the lower levels of Equinox without being mugged once. As soon as his life was in danger in some way or another, something always happened, allowing him to get out of the situation. This was very odd indeed...

As he was pondering the remarkable changes that had occurred in his life, Eryan failed to notice the two brutes who were shadowing him with the intent to rob him. Indeed, he barely even noticed when they suddenly and brutally disappeared. Only a faint sound caught his attention and when he turned, all he saw was a long and empty gangway.

He was about to keep walking when he let out a surprised cry. A man was standing right next to him, a strange individual with a face he could barely make out. Eryan may have been standing right in front of him, but he felt like he wasn't quite real. The man slowly placed his hand on Eryan's shoulder.

"Go back home."

And Eryan did go home, without really knowing why.

As the former mercenary moved away, the strange individual observed him for a long time then disappeared in the shadows. No one could see him: he was one of the Silent Ones—strange beings who had the gift of going unnoticed. Some say they are the servants of the Geneticians.

His mission was to protect all those who had been marked by the Eye, and Eryan was one of them. From now on, he was the subject of an experiment, a pawn who would involuntarily serve the plans of the true masters of the oceans.

The End

Evan Riley Klamber (Order #46797570)

CHAPTER ONE

THE WORLD OF THE DEEP

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

CHAPTER 1.1

HISTORY

"Humankind was born in the seas and is now coming back here to die."

— Vulrick the Mad

INTRODUCTION

The *Polaris RPG* is set in a far future where the world aboveground has become uninhabitable for the human species. Human beings have found refuge in the depths of the ocean, where they try to somehow survive in spite of the many difficulties they encounter in this hostile environment. The species' degeneration (characterized by the increasing number of sterile individuals and various genetic mutations), the perpetual wars that have ravaged entire colonies, the monsters, and, above all, the difficulty of exploiting natural resources are the immediate problems encountered by this civilization.

In this new world of silence and darkness, players can choose to become agents of one of the underwater factions, mercenaries working to keep afloat, or freelancers trying to establish their own communities. No matter which side they pick, they will discover that nothing is completely black or white, and that humankind will need to unite against a common adversity if it wants to survive.

Meanwhile, they will have to fight against all odds and gear up as best they can, buying precious breathing mixes or fluids. They will need to tinker, patch up, and stitch together their ships. Luck may smile upon them when they discover brand-new equipment or one of the stashes left behind by the ominous Empire of the Geneticians. Their fate will be much darker if they happen to stumble upon raiders or pirates. Adventurers will, however, get a chance to gain fame and even influence the world's destiny through their actions and discoveries. They can battle the worst criminals of the ocean to put an end to their despicable activities or they can take a stand against the oppression that some states inflict against some parts of the population. Humankind is in need of heroes, and empires can sometimes be born from simple ideals.

All these elements and many others make up the backdrop of this universe in which one great mystery prevails: the *Polaris Flux* (also called *Flux* or *Polaris Effect*).

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"The earth of today has fallen into chaos. There is nothing left of what our ancestors knew. Our planet has gone through a series of catastrophic events of biblical scale, which have made life impossible for humans on the surface. Of these cataclysms we know very little, neither what they were nor what caused them. Some whisper that the High Council of the Hegemony keeps this information quiet for the common good. Others claim that the Cult of the Trident keeps the memories of the past in their computers.

Whatever the truth may be, what is left of the non-submerged lands is swept by constant storms, energy maelstroms, acid rains, colossal tornadoes, and deadly radioactive fields. The land is now populated by monstrous, parasite-ridden creatures that rule over a desolate world. The plant life has also adapted to this new environment. Trees have turned into terrifying and vicious predators that catch the careless in their sprawling branches. Small plants have learned to move and hunt. Swarms of repulsive insects rain down on the remains of the earthly civilization, overshadowed by giants from another time, eroded by parasites. The wide-open Gates of Hell unleash their horrific hordes upon our world.

Humankind had to flee the surface, leaving behind a few fortified and automated factories that provide a selection of vital commodities. Humans have established themselves throughout the oceans to rebuild civilization. The world they discovered was even larger than the previous one, and filled with mystery and dangers.

Many colonies try to survive in this new dark and silent world, where oxygen has become the most precious commodity. Wars, pirates, raiders, terrible marine predators, and strange phenomena continuously threaten this new society, which is as fragile as crystal."

— Veriramis, historian in the neutral city of Equinox

"What do those half-witted primates know about History? Look at them, struggling in our web like trapped insects. They do not know that we imagined their History, we created their History, we are their History!"

— Cyrull the Creator

RECENT HISTORY

THE BEGINNING (? TO 0)

We know as little about the history of the pre-apocalyptic civilization as we do about what occurred between that terrible tragedy and year 0. Centuries after cataclysms ravaged the earth's surface, humanity teetered on the brink of extinction. Their technology was not enough to allow the last few survivors to survive under the oceans. Then the Geneticians appeared. They came with the secrets of the fluid and many other marvels. Their empire soon dominated what was left of the world. Under their reign, humanity started to grow and prosper again. The bottom of the ocean became the birthplace of great cities, and the abysses revealed amazing treasures. Cities were built inside underground realms and there were dreams of one day reconquering the surface world. Exo-respirators were invented and they saved many species of marine mammals. No one knows exactly how long the Empire of the Geneticians lasted, but by the time their reign came to an end, their technology had enabled them to send missions to the moon and Mars.

However, all the marvels that the Empire brought with it had a price. What they did has either been forgotten or has been hidden from later generations. One thing is certain: it must have been terrifying indeed, as we now remember it as the Empire of Evil. A terrible war shook the underwater world and stained it red. Huge fleets fought against each other in tremendous battles. Cities were annihilated.

In the end, the Azure Alliance crushed the Empire of the Geneticians once and for all, aided by what some think is the mysterious Polaris Flux, of which we still know very little. It is still uncertain whether the Azure Alliance could actually have used this unknown power.

THE GOLDEN AGE (0 TO 150)

Year 0 marked the first year of the Azure Alliance's reign. The total human population at the time is estimated to have been 900 million individuals.

The world all left behind by the Empire of the Geneticians lay in ruins. Its masters sabotaged all of their databases and thus destroyed centuries of research and history. Nonetheless, a great part of their knowledge survived the conflict, although some secrets—the science of fluids, of Hybrids, and of hyperalloys—had disappeared. The Alliance began rebuilding the world. The enormous reserves of fluids, living modules made out of hyperalloys, fusion micro-reactors, and diving exo-armors, left behind by the Empire, gave them some hope. The engineers would have time to rediscover their secrets. People started to hope again and dream of a better future.

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During the Golden Age, many technologies were rediscovered or mastered, such as fusion and bio-implants. Cities were rebuilt and the population increased twofold. Peace prevailed at the bottom of the oceans for more than a century. The Alliance reactivated the space rocket launch site and sent an expedition to the moon. There they discovered the corpses of the Empire's last colonies.

THE END OF A DREAM (150 TO 250)

The dream shattered in the middle of the second century. Subterranean cities were attacked by fearsome creatures: the Burrowers. These monsters devastated the installations rapidly, and once again humankind was confined to the boundaries of the oceans. However, the worst was yet to come. At the end of the second century, the scientific community made a terrifying discovery. The proportion of sterile individuals within the population was constantly increasing, and many individuals suffered from a strong genetic degeneration. The human species was dying. They tried to reverse the process by every means they could, but to no avail. The scientific community was shrinking and their skills were quickly overwhelmed by the problems. A strict genetic selection was instituted to breed a generation of new geniuses who would be able to find solutions. This inbreeding only increased the genetic degeneration.

Genetician Council

The virus that causes this sterility remained a mystery. In 250 the Azure Alliance fell to pieces, despite Admiral Febock's valiant resistance. The communities felt doomed, and shut themselves off from the world. Pirates, mercenaries, micro-states, and raiders waged merciless wars.

THE NEW ORDER (251 TO 400)

The struggles between communities lasted for more than a century. In the year 351, the human population had decreased by more than 50% and more than a third of it was sterile. A new order was already taking shape on the horizon: the age of the Hegemony.

In 361, the Hatteras community, one of the largest underwater realms, unearthed a secret Genetician depot. The knowledge contained inside it would change the course of things. Dozens of small states declared war on Hatteras in order to take over this important discovery, especially its greatest rival, the Red League. All the invaders were repelled, and a year later they faced a new threat: a new kind of cruiser built with hyperalloy technology and defended by fearsome elite Techno-Hybrid troops. Hatteras quickly prevailed and became the Hegemony in 370. Led by a mysterious group known as the Patriarchs, the Hegemony established a veritable dictatorship with the official purpose of saving humankind from annihilation. This new superpower began to enforce a genetic selection policy. All fertile individuals were placed into breeding centers. Fetuses were subjected to manipulations designed to increase their intellectual capabilities.

The Hegemony began a great colonization program enabling settlers to create their own communities, under its protection. This program naturally collided with the many small empires that already populated the seas. The ensuing wars, and especially the fearsome Hegemonic bombers, brought about mass destruction.

In 375, Admiral Piotr Devrac from the Coral Republic suggested a great meeting of the various leaders in a city located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean: Equinox.

This big city was the center of a community dominated by priests from the Cult of the Trident, who seemed to have a strong influence on marine mammals. Their goal was to establish peace in the oceans. At first the admiral was met with incredulity and sarcasm from enemy states, including the Hegemony and the Red League, who both claimed that it was a conspiracy to eliminate the main opposing military leaders.

The Cult of the Trident then openly challenged any kingdom refusing to cooperate. The Hegemony and the Red League united for the first time and dispatched a fleet to silence the troublemakers. The rebel city, located in a heat flow, was hard to detect. But, when it was eventually found by the armada, it was shocked to discover that the city was surrounded by thousands of marine mammals. This was the last thing the fleet saw. That was when humanity first encountered

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the Polaris Flux, and it annihilated the armada. After this disaster, the great empires accepted Admiral Devrac's offer. What is remembered in history as the "Admirals' Council" set forth laws that have governed underwater warfare to this day, and more importantly defined common grounds to ensure humanity's survival despite rivalries between states. The main clauses are:

- Any discovery in the field of genetics must be conveyed to the Genetic High Council, which permanently sits on the neutral Equinox station. This council consists of the highest authorities from each state.
- The Hegemony is committed to sharing hyperalloy technology with the other states.
- No combat is allowed to threaten hydroculture zones.
- The Cult of the Trident's city and its surroundings are declared neutral territories.
- All of the states must encourage the development of new independent underwater societies.
- All of the states must contribute to space research programs, collectively maintain the last land-based launch site, and work jointly on the recolonization of existing space stations, which are now declared neutral areas.
- Any underwater pollution is prohibited.
- Marine mammals are to be protected.
- Emissaries from the Cult of the Trident must be given access to all marine cities and bases.
- Any individual displaying a gift for the mastery of the Polaris Flux must be delivered to the Cult of the Trident.
- Each state commits to a monthly provision of a fertile man and woman to the Cult of the Trident. Under no circumstances should these people be considered prisoners, and it is preferable that they be volunteers.
- As a trade-off, the Cult of the Trident commits to a monthly return to each state of some fluid and several Geno-Hybrids. Indeed, the Cult's scientists rediscovered these two technologies, which were once believed lost.
- A special group, the Fellowship of the Watchers, will enforce these laws. This order will be financed by all the states and its staff selected by the Cult of the Trident.

The neutral city of Equinox became the center of the world a few months after these laws were enacted. Today, it is the largest of all the underwater cities.

Between the years 386 and 400, wars were less frequent as the Equinox diplomats ensured the conflicts did not escalate beyond reason. The most powerful states launched themselves into a frantic conquest of the oceans by developing many smaller communities. A number of the newly formed populations quickly declared their independence, but only the largest could do without the protection of the superpowers. The space program was somehow restored in spite of the many tensions within communities, and in the year 498 the moon base was back online.

MODERN TIMES (400 TO 565)

During this whole period, humankind managed to maintain its undersea presence. Full-scale wars were rare, and smaller border conflicts prevailed. The most powerful states were the Hegemony with its crushing military strength, the Red League that brought together the greatest possible number of smaller communities, the Coral Republic and its sentient coral fields, and the newly founded Polar Alliance, a small community that more recently became powerful after discovering a Genetician depot. Today, these great nations scheme, influence, and spy on each other, each hoping one day to establish itself as humankind's dominant power. This quest for power mostly rests on alliances with a myriad of micro-states. Human life has become too precious to be able to afford exterminating populations when they refuse to obey an empire. First and foremost, everyone hides and exploits their fertile populations. Indeed, as of 565, humankind has not found a cure for the viral infection causing sterility and there is still no solution to the genetic degeneration. Perhaps one day the Genetic High Council will find a solution. Maybe salvation will come from one of the Empire of the Geneticians' secret depots, actively sought for by the superpowers.

Sterility is not the only issue troubling the humans who live beneath the seas. Pirates and raiders are relentlessly looking for gear, depots, and fertile individuals, and they have no respect for rules. They remain elusive, skulking in trenches and vast stretches of underwater mountains. They are humanity's worst predators. Then there are the Burrowers, creatures that always attack subterranean cities en masse and prevent humankind from reconquering the surface. The Black Sun Fellowship, a dissident order born from the Cult of the Trident, uses the Polaris Flux to impose its totalitarian view. Other constant threats include the Fellowship of the Deep, a nihilistic group set on annihilating what is left of civilization, and the Leviathan Community that uses monsters from the abysses for unknown motives.

RECENT EVENTS (566 TO 569)

Many changes have occurred over the last four years. A so-called rescue mission organized by the Hegemony led to a grave crisis threatening to once again bloody the whole world's seas. The Fuego Liberdad community was literally held hostage by the *Atlantis* and its battle fleet. There, the Patriarchs' troops plundered a Genetician depot, thus challenging the authority of the Sub-Marine States Organization (S.M.S.O.). A few days later, a dreadful

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battle pitted the Hegemonic flagship against the *Argonaut*—the ship of the infamous Telkran Raljik—and ended up in the *Atlantis* running aground. In spite of that, the Hegemonians took over the depot. Few people know what they found there. Some speak of a horrifying weapon that the Patriarchs' nation is getting ready to unleash on the world.

One thing is for sure: the Hegemony became especially active from year 567 onward. Its fleets were sent on maneuvers to every sea around the globe. The *Artemis*, the second ship of the Atlantis-class, was to be operational starting the middle of that year. Hegemonic troop deployments were reported in all the subterranean sectors of their nation. Satellite weapon discharges were even reported in South America, near the position of one of their battle fleets. And to top it off, a Hegemonic ambassador was assassinated on Equinox. A terrible spy war ensued for more than a year.

There were rumors about a mysterious Exeter Directive, and it was whispered in the official circles that the Patriarchs' nation was preparing a full-scale offensive against the Red League and the Coral Republic. Some overtly accused the Polar Alliance of supporting the Hegemony. A few months later, at the height of the crisis, the Red League's leaders triggered Operation Minos, which, fortunately, was soon cancelled. Many small-scale battles occurred during year 567. In the Pirate Kingdoms, the Llend Entertainment Station was attacked and the pirate fleets united against a mysterious aggressor (many suspect the Polar Alliance).

These last few years were also affected by strange phenomena, such as the appearance of several Azure Alliance ships, the unexplained destruction of Phaleon (a small community located in the north of the Hegemony's territory), and the increased rumors heard about a mysterious race living in the deep: the Ternasets. In the Coral Republic, a new disease has recently appeared and the authorities are on edge. In commercial harbors, several individuals have been found dead and completely desiccated, as if their bodies aged at an accelerated rate.

In 569, two new nations were born: Amazonia and Rodhia. This year marks the emergence of a new superpower: the Mediterranean Union, the technology of which is said to even surpass that of the Hegemony.

Once again, humankind is going through a troubled period and it's anyone's guess what will happen next. It seems that conspiracies and schemes are popping up everywhere. The wildest rumors are spreading within the commercial ports. There is talk of incredible discoveries related to genetic degeneration, of peace with the Burrowers, and a mysterious project led by the Coral Republic in association with the famous company, Cortex. Lastly, in the darkness of the oceans, one name is rattling the powers that be: Conscience!

All these events and issues weave the background in which the men and women of this century live. And yet, they dream of rebuilding a new world in the future. This hope is embodied in the space colonization program, which seems to have been spared by all the conflicts. Launched from the Mars orbital station, the first missions sent to Jupiter to reconquer the Europa base have been successful. This is a new hope for humankind to find a new world, somewhere in the cosmos, sometime in the future.

Ruins Raiders on the job

Evlen Riley Kiawatier (Order : 46797870)

CHAPTER 1.2

CIVILIZATIONS OF THE DEEP

"When I watch our majestic vessels cruise above stretches of immaculate corals, shoals of dolphins playing amidst Azuria's structures and all the marvels the oceans offer, I do not miss the surface world. Let it burn, I don't mind. Oh! Admittedly there are wars, but at least down here, they have the advantage of being silent."

— Melia Tarcis, resident of Azuria, Coral Republic

The vast underwater realm that is now home to what is left of humankind consists of a multitude of states, most of which are very small in size. They try to establish their idea of civilization and to participate, on their own level, in the rebuilding of a world in utter chaos. There are enormous differences between the communities. The most powerful ones have access to huge production factories and cutting-edge technology. The weakest, in other words, 99% of them, have to settle for tinkering and bartering to survive. While the Hegemony can produce gigantic ships like the *Atlantis*, small states have to use all kinds of tricks to maintain two or three half-rusted cruisers in working order and carry out the upkeep of their underwater microstations. This is a world of many contrasts, where the high technology mastered by a few is contrasted with the arts of tinkering and makeshift repairing imposed on the great majority.

But in a world like this, what is the definition of a sovereign state? The right to sovereignty has been established by the Cult of the Trident. A society can only be formed if it is able to produce. Becoming a state requires the production of some commodity or another that can be used by the rest of humankind. Thus, most new communities are born around a mining or agricultural operation.

To be acknowledged, a community must first obtain a concession. These are assigned and certified on Equinox, where the Sub-Marine States Organization (S.M.S.O.) sits. After a quick study of the file, the concession is either validated or rejected. To be validated, the community must meet a few conditions:

1. The community commits to producing a useful commodity within a year of the concession's certification. If this condition is not met, all the community's properties will be seized by the state that sponsored its establishment. The commodity produced can be anything as long as it benefits humankind. The S.M.S.O. ascertains the product's validity after a year. A mercenary nation is perfectly acceptable, for example.

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2. The new community must be sponsored by an already established state. The latter commits to providing a minimum of help and protection to the former. This sponsor state will be able to confiscate all of the operation if it is proven unproductive after a year.

3. The community must consist of at least a hundred individuals and at least ten reproductive couples. The latter can be provided by the sponsoring state.

4. The community must ensure proper exploitation of its reproductive potential and maintain an acceptable birthrate (at least five births per year for a population of 100).

5. The community commits to handing over any individual sensitive to the Polaris Effect to the Cult of the Trident.

6. The community commits to providing a reproductive couple to the Cult of the Trident every month when its fertile population reaches a satisfactory level (20% of its total population).

7. Anything discovered on the community's premises remains the inalienable property of the new community, with the exception of discoveries related to the field of genetics, especially when it comes to sterility. In that event, the new state must immediately communicate this information to the Genetic High Council.

8. If all the conditions are met and respected, the community will be declared independent after a year. It will be considered a state in its own right after ten years, or earlier if it is considered important enough (after the discovery of a Genetician depot, for example).

9. A state can have an independent armed force, establish embassies in other states, and send an envoy to the Genetic High Council and the S.M.S.O.

10. A state must contribute to the conquest of space and help maintain the land-based production sites. A state can appoint some of its citizens to fill the ranks of the Watchers.

These rules have allowed the creation of many small states with dreams of establishing themselves as superpowers or at least surviving as best they can.

THE GREAT NATIONS

HEGEMONY

GEOGRAPHY

The Hegemony's territory stretches out along what used to be the East Coast of North America. It reaches from the area of the Grand Banks to the Milne Seamount in the east and the Puerto Rico Trench in the south. To the west, it controls all the underwater areas to the edge of the dry lands. The Hegemony's influence extends out far beyond its geographic boundaries. It is a nation rich in mineral and agricultural resources. The whole of the Hegemonic territory is well networked by communication stations. Its frontiers are watched by fluctuating fortresses and static detection bases.

HISTORY

The Hegemony was created from a large mining base by a man named Yvan Paramar. The mining base, then known by the name of Hatteras, soon became one of the largest beneath the seas, both from its riches and the size of its population. The territory also included several bases and cities of the Empire of the Geneticians, some of which still exist to this day. The Paramar family reached its golden age as part of the Azure Alliance. Indeed, it was Karl Paramar, Yvan's great-grandson, who led the final attack against the Genetician fleet and became one of the highest-ranking leaders of the new order.

After the fall of the Alliance, the community of Hatteras closed in on itself. The Paramar family, affected by sterility, slowly faded away. Once the last member of the family had died, the enclave was on the brink of civil war. There were countless candidates to the succession. Faced with the danger of seeing their whole society fall apart, the admirals of Hatteras decided to unite and take over the leadership. The military coup was bloody, but it restored order to the community. For over 20 years, Admiral Trenton laid down the law and developed an ambitious military program. He also gave public funding to wide-reaching research programs to locate the depots left by the Empire of the Geneticians. He was rumored to have been haunted by a terrible secret that led him to commit suicide in the year 301. His successor, Great Admiral Keryss, launched an intense expansion policy. This was known as the Age of War. The Hatteran cruisers sailed the seas and brought a great number of populations under their rule. In the south of the kingdom, hundreds of smaller states took up the Azure Alliance's banner as their own to symbolize their resistance against the Hatteran war machine. These states united to form the Red League—red from the blood of Great Admiral Keryss's soldiers. The expansion of Hatteras was contained at last.

For the next 30 years, the seas were tainted with the remains of uncountable victims of this war, and yet none of the powers managed to win outright over any others.

It wasn't until the year 339 when, exhausted and bled dry, the rival states finally recalled their troops. Great Admiral Keryss died in the year 346. His son, Olmon, became his successor. He was considered by all to be incompetent and a genetic deviant, yet the impending protests soon died down and, to everyone's surprise, Olmon's policies seemed to prove effective. It is quite probable that Olmon Keryss was merely a puppet whose strings were being pulled by more powerful individuals. Under his reign, towns were built, farming was developed, and the whole of society was profoundly reformed. For a start, the fertile population was treated with far more respect than other citizens. Mutants and political opponents were assigned the least desirable tasks or enlisted in the armed forces. The elite of society was made

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up of aristocratic families, scientists, and officers. Inspired by a few fragments of the ancient past, Olmon tried to give his realm a more imperial character. The uniforms and suits became luxurious, and titles of nobility made a comeback. The sumptuous domed city of Keryss was built to recreate the living conditions of the surface before the apocalypse. At this point, Olmon proclaimed himself emperor. He was assassinated two days later, on April 6, 357. Somebody obviously thought that he had gone a little too far!

In the year 358, the Elite Council, supported by the naval forces, took power for itself. It placed the Council of Patriarchs at the head of Hatteras. This mysterious political group has run the state for almost two centuries now. The Council is composed of 12 individuals who only communicate to the people via the public holographic channel. Their faces are always hidden by the hoods of their ceremonial robes. Nowadays it is the only recognized power. It reigns over all of society and directly commands the armed forces through its intermediary, the High Admiral. In 361, the exploration teams of Hatteras discovered several depots left by the Empire of the Geneticians. It took several months to gain access to them, and some tough battles to destroy their defenses, especially the combat drones that protected their secrets. The scientists found many wonders hidden inside the depots.

The reaction of the other states was almost immediate: the Hegemony was attacked from all sides. A war without mercy was declared on every border of the realm, and after a year, it seemed on the brink of defeat. But on June 30, 362, the largest of the Red League fleets was attacked with a formation of 28 combat vessels moving at a depth that had never before been reached by vessels that size. The battle was cut short. The League's torpedoes barely made a dent in the armor plating of these mysterious cruisers that destroyed the enemy vessels one after the other with their huge ramming spurs. At the same time, the Hatteran bombers reduced the capitals of the larger enemy states to rubble. They were assisted by a new kind of infantry troop: the techno-hybrids. These hideously deformed creatures, equipped with implants that allow them to breathe underwater without diving suits, terrorized the cities and brought their citizens under heel. In less than six months, Hatteras had reclaimed the whole of its previous territory, and added to it hundreds of minor states. A cease-fire was declared at the end of that year. For several years after that, the various participants stood their ground. Hatteras reformed its political structure, and in the year 370, the former mining base no longer existed. That was the dawn of the Hegemony, a power that would lay down the law by launching a vast colonization program and imposing its fearsome repopulation policy. For the next five years, no other power seemed to be able to rival that of the Hegemony. Only the Red League could put up some form of resistance thanks to its alliances with the Pirate Kingdoms. The Hegemonic troops reaped victory after victory, blindly destroying the enemy cities and taking their fertile citizens. However, the intervention of the Coral Republic, alongside the Red League, was about to end its expansion.

The Admirals' Council and the discovery of the Polaris Effect put a permanent end to the Hegemonic armada. The Council of Patriarchs was even forced to return a part of the conquered territories. For over a century, the Hegemony worked to consolidate its position, becoming one of the most modern societies on the planet. It seems, however, to have abandoned its dreams of military conquest, and now prefers more subtle ways of achieving its goals, accepting the mediation of the Cult of the Trident. In 548, Lord Viramis was named High Admiral of the Hegemony. His first order was the construction of the largest battle cruiser ever built: the *Atlantis*. He reformed the army, in particular by creating groups specialized in the search for Genetician sites, legions of underwater commandos, and teams of explorers to travel on the surface or in the underground networks infested with Burrowers.

By 566, the Hegemonic army had the largest armed fleet developed by any of the sub-marine states. Their two Atlantis-class vessels—the *Atlantis* and the *Artemis*—are the symbols of this fleet, the proof of its superior power and technological advancement. In 567, by order of the Council of Patriarchs, High Admiral Viramis sent a part of his fleet to the small community of Fuego Liberdad. This move was part of the Exeter Directive, a plan designed to crush the Red League, the Coral Republic, and the Cult of the Trident. The Hegemonians managed to get their hands on a Genetician depot that contained a terrifying weapon. However, the *Atlantis* ran aground after a battle with the *Argonaut*, the vessel of the pirate, Telkran Raljik. This crushing defeat cost the commander of that ship, Vira Our, her rank of Great Admiral of the Hegemonic fleet. A few months later, Viramis realized that he had been misled by the Patriarchs, and that the execution of the Exeter Directive could cause the end of all life on earth. He gave the order to cancel the operation, but to his surprise, he discovered that extremist movements inside the Prism defied his authority.

At the same time as these events, the underground troops had come into contact with the Burrowers for the first time. Peace with the creatures would only last a few months.

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Without any explanation, the Burrowers launched a massive attack on the Hegemonic installations.

In the year 568, after having prevented a war with the other nations, the High Admiral turned his attention to his own forces. Once again, the order was given to clean out the extremist elements, but the currents ran deeper than expected. Furthermore, it seemed that the Patriarchs had changed their policies. They had become far more active than in previous years, and made it perfectly clear to Viramis that he was merely the executor of their orders. Today, the Hegemony is a nation in the middle of a deep reorganization.

SOCIETY

The society of the Hegemony is a modern one, with access to the highest technologies. Its population is estimated at over 48 million inhabitants, which makes it the second largest after the Coral Republic. It is dominated by the Council of Patriarchs whose members are truly worshipped by the population. They are considered to be the guardians of the ancient wisdom and as genetically pure beings with intellectual abilities that place them far above common mortals. Officially, they select their successors from among the most perfect beings produced by the breeding centers. Nobody would think to question the legitimacy of their power. Their word is the law.

This law is expressed by their spokesman, the High Admiral. Lord Viramis holds in his hands the totality of the power bestowed by the Council of the Patriarchs. He is their executor, and he has a considerable amount of room to maneuver. His suit of white, underwater-capable combat armor is a true legend beneath the seas. Viramis is a domineering figure who demands a perfectly ordered society. He is known for his expansionist views and his thirst for power, a reputation that is hardly reassuring for the future.

High Admiral Viramis

Viramis focuses the base of his power on the men of the Prism. At the heart of the intelligence and counter-espionage services of the Hegemony, the Prism exists only to carry out the orders of the High Admiral (although some recent events prove this is not always the case). Its tasks are many and varied: research any form of dissidence, keep an eye on the admirals of the fleet, and apprehend any dissidents and fertile citizens who refuse to join the breeding centers. Important dignitaries are often accompanied by a "political counselor" from the Prism.

There are many different secret services in the Hegemony. Each service is specialized in a different domain, such as spying on the smaller communities, controlling the citizens, searching for Genetician depots, etc.

Public safety in the Hegemony is entrusted to the S.S.A.F. Division (Security & Surveillance Action Forces). This police service is all-powerful in the Hegemonic territories. It disposes a huge police force that keeps the peace in the state's cities and several specialized intervention groups.

The second pillar of Viramis' power is his own personal army. The Pandora Cohort consists of fanatical troops. Techno-hybrids, underwater commandos, infantry, saboteurs, and spies of all sorts, any regular division has at least one of the Pandora units attached to it. These soldiers are all highly trained and most of them are given drugs that inhibit their emotions.

The Hegemonic hierarchy is very organized. At the top of the pyramid of power, the officers form the most powerful and respected class. Next are the male breeders and the scientists who are treasured, well protected, and given every possible favor in exchange for their somewhat reduced freedom. Then come the religious orders and the aristocracy who make up the largest part of the elite. These five categories share political and economic domination of the nation. The members of these categories are first-class citizens.

The majority of citizens are considered second class. By order of importance, this includes the security forces, non-commissioned officers, and the economically active.

All non-active citizens are considered third class: delinquents, the ill and disabled, the old, intellectuals, and slaves (generally prisoners). It is worth noting that genetic deviants, or mutants, are not rejected by the population. This medical condition does not affect a citizen's status.

The whole population benefits from Hegemonic technology. The consequence of this is that life is good in this nation's cities, as long as one does not question the powers that be and one works for the benefit of the whole community. Any

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non-productive citizens are controlled, but not persecuted. Indeed, they are used as reserve infantry troops in case of war. Some dissidents even whisper that, although it is not made public, they are used as organic livestock to ensure the survival of the upper classes or as experiment subjects during a medical or genetic discovery. For the most dangerous individuals and the most heinous murderers, the sentence is exile to the surface or hard labor in the empire's penitentiaries.

Fertile children get special consideration. Any children who are not contaminated by the virus are considered to be extremely precious. They are placed into special education centers until they reach their full maturity between 18 and 20 years old. From that age onwards, the males can sometimes leave these centers, as long as they continue to make regular deposits at the fertility banks. However, the most productive ones are treated like the women and are heavily guarded. The females, however, will be used to produce the children manipulated by the Hegemony's genetic science. In this society, the word for "a birth" has been replaced by "a litter." Indeed, the scientists have developed several embryo-cloning techniques that allow a mother to carry several children during each pregnancy. A fertile woman will be kept in the institute until she reaches the age of 40. After that, she is free and benefits from an apartment and a small pension for the rest of her life. She is free to have more children if she so wishes, and if she does, she will even be given a bonus. Contaminated children are placed in the adoption institutes to be selected and raised by sterile couples.

The Hegemony has a good birth rate. Even though it is only just higher than the death rate, it is enough to ensure a constant renewal of the nation's population. However, a part of the population considers that the harsh conditions required to maintain this birth rate are too extreme. Voices clamor for a reorganization of the reproduction policies to allow society's fertile people, especially the females, to enjoy greater freedom. Recently, a group named the Pact of Hera has assembled to appeal to the authorities on this subject.

Technologically speaking, the Hegemony is by far the leader in military sciences (although, over the last few years, the Mediterranean Union has become a serious competitor to the Patriarchs' nation). The nation's preferred areas of research are drones, molecular armors, weapons, techno-hybrids, and warships. In terms of civil engineering, they have built the first domed city to recreate the conditions of the surface before the catastrophe. This majestic establishment is now this enormously powerful nation's capital. The development of the space industry and the factories running on the surface are two other key areas that have benefited all of the underwater nations.

Great Admiral Valastor

TERRITORY

The vast territory controlled by the Hegemony is intensely exploited. There are a large number of extraction sites, and the nation counts many mines of Cylast—the fundamental element of hyperalloys—and several mines of tri-terranium, the rarest mineral of the abyssal trenches. The hydroculture and animal farms are mainly located underwater on the shallow lands near the coasts. In these areas the soil is very fertile but farming it is dangerous because atmospheric disturbances can affect the seafloor at these shallow depths. The nation also intensely exploits the thermal sources created by regional subsurface magma.

The Hegemony contains over 20 major cities and roughly 100 smaller towns. The capital is built to the north of the Bermuda Rise along the Kelvin Seamount range, famous for its cliff-side cities. Keryss is the nation's largest city. The gigantic dome is 1,000 meters high and 10 kilometers in diameter—about 8 km for the dome and 2 km for the surrounding installations. It is made from SapphireT, an alloy developed by the Geneticians, and, in case of emergency, can be covered by a molecular steel shell. The dome itself is constantly swept by surveillance drones checking for any sign of damage. There are many sub-marine domes that use these systems, but what makes the city of Keryss truly unique is that it was built like one of the old surface cities. Basing their designs on the many ruined ancient cities in the area, the architects have recreated everything: streets, buildings, houses, etc. The inside of the dome is sometimes animated with projected images of blue skies or starry nights. Some public gardens and even a few carefully maintained forests reinforce the sensation of living on the surface. Gigantic ventilation systems are placed strategically to simulate a breeze. Keryss is a rich and pleasant city, with its luxurious quarters, its middle-class districts, and its slums. However, the city is not only confined to its visible constructions. The sea floor beneath Keryss is also home to other installations, military bases, research centers, shunting yards, etc.

A dozen smaller towns built into the cliff-sides of the Kelvin Seamount range are also a part of Keryss. The cliffs of the

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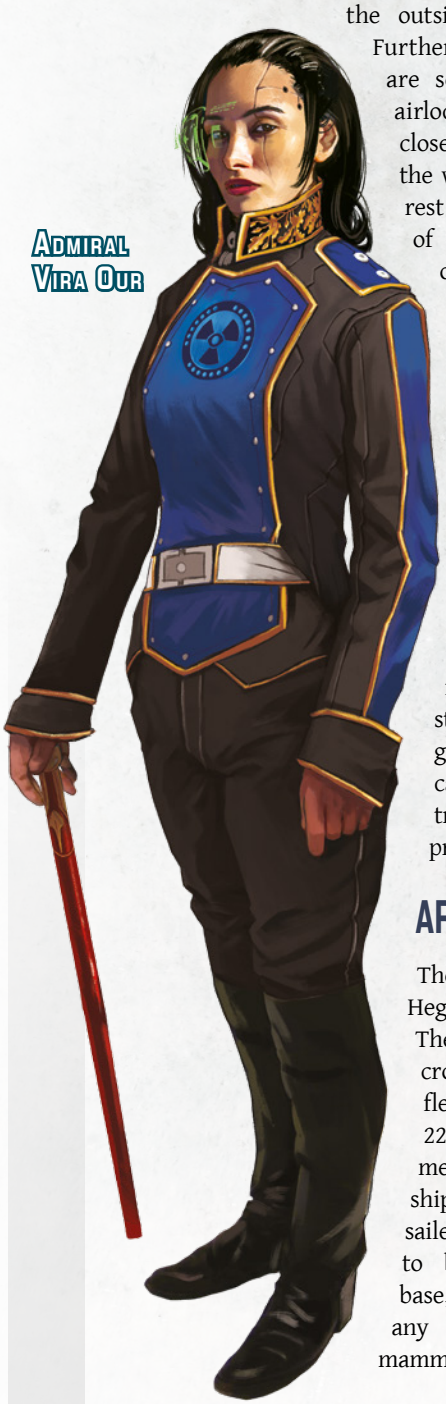
Kelvin Seamount range are also home to many military stations, military and civilian transport companies, and a number of hangars. Five of the Hegemony's transport tunnels radiate out from the central dome. Each of these tunnels, protected by the same security features as the city's dome, contains one road and a line of ultrahigh-speed public transports. The longest tunnel spans from Keryss to Equinox via Ultar and Ourgor. Secondary transport routes branch out from these main tunnels, reaching out to other cities and large extraction sites. The transport tunnels are patrolled on a regular basis by several elements of the security services, both on the inside and the outside of the structures. Furthermore, the tunnels are segmented by isolation airlocks that automatically close if there is a breach in the walls. Security stations and rest areas are available at each of these airlocks, and each one provides access to the outside. There are plans to build several more routes in the coming years.



Admiral Vira Our

The other cities of the Hegemony are more classically built. They are either partially underground or built like most of the other sub-marine installations.

The Hegemony owns the second largest commercial fleet of all the sub-marine states. Cabin cruisers and gigantic transport barges carrying all manner of goods travel the seas under the protection of military vessels.

ARMED FORCES

The greatest strength of the Hegemony is its military power. The *Atlantis* is naturally the crown jewel of the Hegemonic fleet. At 3 kilometers long, 223 meters high, and 200 meters wide, this monster of a ship is the largest to have ever sailed the seas. It was designed to be a true mobile navy base, capable of supervising any military operation. This mammoth vessel boasts a number of surprising features, including 17,000 crew members, 2 repair factories and several squadrons of interceptors. A second Atlantis-class cruiser, the *Artemis*, has also just recently been finished.

Admiral Alkard

Admiral Veer

The Hegemony is equipped with a powerful military fleet, made up of cruisers, escorts, bombers, frigates, and swarms of interceptors. Its infantry divisions include squadrons of techno-hybrids whose reputation is already well established. The Hegemony's naval forces are completed by combat drones, intervention vehicles for the seafloor, and an incalculable number of automated defense stations.

Its terrestrial and underground forces are just as impressive, as the battles against the Burrowers and the exploration of dry land are among High Admiral Viramis' main priorities. Because of its considerable military might, the Hegemony rarely requires the services of mercenary groups. The Hegemonic forces are all equipped with modern and well-maintained gear of excellent quality.

PERSONALITIES

THE COUNCIL OF PATRIARCHS:

The Council has reigned over the Hegemony for the last two centuries. Its headquarters is located in the highest cliff-side city of Keryss. Only a few chosen ones can set foot there. It is impossible to identify the Patriarchs behind their masks. It is said that even the High Admiral has never seen their faces. One thing is certain; they dominate the Hegemony with unwavering power. The population worships the Patriarchs who guarantee the Hegemony's unity and cohesion.

The members of the Council are worshiped as heroes, for the people believe the Patriarchs are prophets who receive the word of God, and that their words are a manifestation of divine energy.

Great Admiral Valastor: As the new Great Admiral of the fleet, Valastor is the commander of the *Artemis*, the latest jewel of the Hegemonic Navy. He is a tough man, totally devoted to the cause of the Hegemony and especially to that of the

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Marquis Ovar Godter Prince Vaughn Ebraer

Patriarchs. Some say that he was raised by the nation's leaders. He is a brilliant strategist, a shrewd man with no emotions.

High Admiral Viramis: He is the leader of the armed forces, and the true possessor of the Hegemony's temporal power. But, above all, Viramis is a rough man who is a hero of past wars. He rules the nation from the top of the highest tower in Keryss, imposing a dictatorial reign with the aim of assuring the survival and supremacy of the Hegemony. He is officially 69 years old, but the dissidents maintain that he is over a hundred. They assert that his surprising vitality is the result of experiments and genetic manipulations that exploit the organs of the lower classes of Hegemonic society. Viramis is a well-built man, with a severe-looking face and an impeccably trimmed white goatee. He is surrounded by a personal entourage of officers and aristocrats. Recently, his authority has been questioned by dissident groups inside his own organization. Most importantly, the Patriarchs no longer give him the free rein that he had before. It would seem that a real struggle for the true power of the Hegemony has begun between Viramis and his masters.

Admiral Alkard: This 56-year-old man is the leader of the Hegemonic fleet and the High Admiral's private counselor. He is considered by all to be one of the most fearsome beings under the seas. However, he is also an inspired strategist and a remarkable leader. He is often seen in the company of Lord Viramis and seems to get along with him perfectly.

Admiral Vira Our: This stunning 50-year-old woman has held her position for 14 years. With a remarkable tactical and strategic mind, she is considered to be a real genius of the art of war. She was the second Great Admiral in the history of the Hegemony, before being demoted after the *Atlantis* ran aground during a battle with the *Argonaut*. Although she is known to be incredibly strict with her men and ruthless in combat, she is seen as moderate. Some rumors suggest that she is fertile but somehow managed to escape the breeding centers with the help of the High Admiral.

Admiral Veer: He commands the border forces and some of the exploration divisions. He is one of the most efficient admirals in the fleet. He is said to be as cold-hearted as a machine, executing the orders of his superiors without question.

Baroness Vilma Terrastet: A member of the aristocracy, she is also the director of the largest cabin cruiser company: Nova. She is one of the richest women of the Hegemony and a personal friend of the High Admiral. She is said to be cunning, possessive, and power-hungry. At the age of 45 she barely looks 30.

Prince Vaughn Ebraer: As the head of the most powerful aristocratic family of the Hegemony, Vaughn Ebraer is one of nation's political organizers. He was the one who initiated their society's main reforms. He is well respected by the people and often opposes the High Admiral.

Telma Tiltane: This woman is on the wanted list of every Hegemony law enforcement service because of her criminal activities. She is fertile and has refused to be taken to a breeding center. She now leads a group that is categorized as

Baroness Vilma Terrastet

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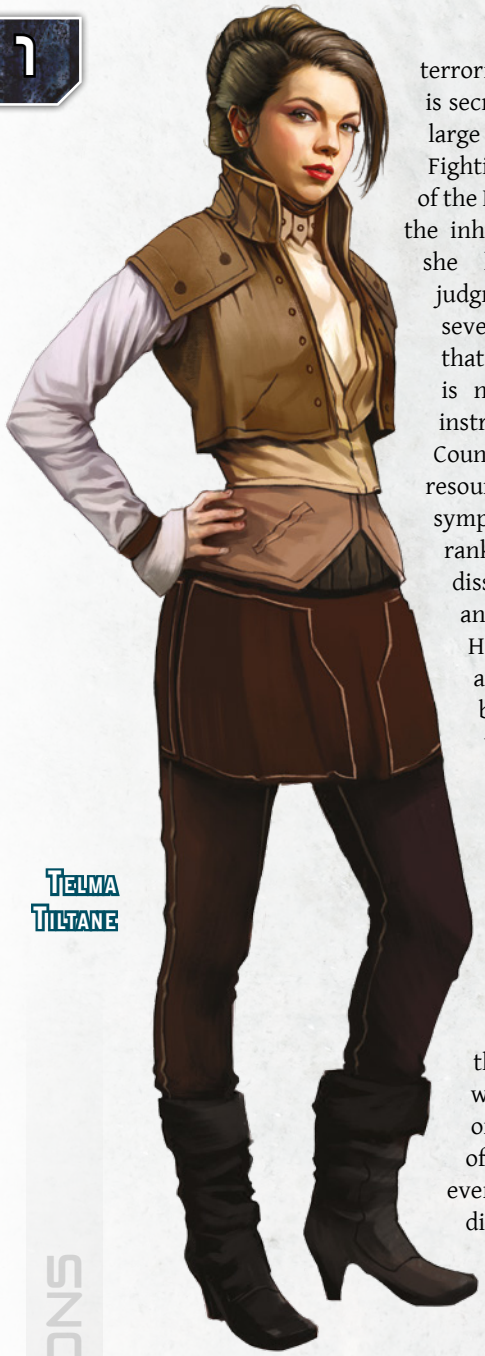

Telma Tiltane

terrorists by the authorities, but is secretly very popular with a large part of the population. Fighting the absolute power of the High Admiral and against the inhuman breeding policies, she has appealed to the judgment of the Patriarchs several times. She maintains that, in fact, the High Admiral is not truly executing the instructions of the venerable Council. The rebellion lacks resources, but more and more sympathizers are joining its ranks. Recently, the famous dissident disappeared after an intervention of the Hegemonic commandos against one of her secret bases. Nobody knows what happened to her.

Marquis Ovar Godter: He is the ambassador of the Hegemony in Equinox. This wise and soft-spoken 58-year-old man is famous for his pacifist policies toward other nations. People commonly bring their complaints to him, which is surprising as he is one of the closest friends of the High Admiral, even though the two have diametrically opposed views on world affairs.

MAIN CITIES

BERMUDA

Population: 1,000,00	**Fertile population:** 60%
Depth: -3,200 to -4,200 m	**Mutant population:** 1%
Community type: multiple complexes and cliff-side city	

Bermuda is a beautiful tourist city, and it is also home to the main breeding centers. Mutants are not welcome here, and they are often arrested and deported. The military forces present in the city are mainly used to keep the peace and maintain security. Many leisure companies are based here, most famous amongst them being Nova,, owner of the most beautiful cruise ships beneath the seas. The breeding centers are not accessible to tourists. On the other hand, everything is done to ensure visitors have a pleasant stay. Visits are often organized to the secure parks reserved for children. There, tourists can watch the children playing with their nannies in artificial parks behind glass walls. This charade is meant to show visitors that the Hegemonic breeding policy is quite humane, and that rumors to the contrary are nothing but lies. The city is linked to Keryss, Clemt, Nox, and Guamea by tunnels.

CLEMT

Population: 900,000	**Fertile population:** 18%
Depth: -600 to -3,200 m	**Mutant population:** 34%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Clemt is a gigantic complex of mining bases that exploit mineral deposits in the Cayman and Puerto-Rico Trenches. Some mines can reach depths of 16,000 meters. The site is extremely well protected. It is often attacked by Burrowers and a majority of the garrison is specialized in underground combat. Living conditions are difficult. Most of the workers are common prisoners, mutants, or slaves. It is rumored that the vast majority of the population are part of rebel movements or groups like the Black Sun Fellowship or the Brothers of the Deep. Visitors are not welcome there. Above all, the governor fears sabotage and spies. The city is connected to Nox, Florea, and Bermuda by tunnels.

CRINEA

Population: 850,000	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -4,700 m	**Mutant population:** 19%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Crinea controls the hydrothermal stations that currently run in the area. It is also an important location for farming and hydroculture centers. However, its most interesting function is the study and exploitation of the Kane Fracture Zone. At the beginning of the century, this trench was about 2,000 meters deep, but it collapsed suddenly. It now measures depths of up to 6,200 meters for dozens of square kilometers. Further explorations are likely to find much deeper trenches in the area. The collapse opened up rich deposits of metals and Cylast, a Genetician depot, and most importantly, opened access to a gigantic network of flooded caves in which archeologists are said to have made some amazing discoveries.

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FEORA

Population: 260,00	**Fertile population:** 18%
Depth: -2,700 m	**Mutant population:** 8%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Feora is made up of dozens of complexes that form a gigantic underwater installation. The city's main activities are farming, hydroculture, and energy farming. It is much like the other Hegemonic cities.

FLOREA

Population: 1,200,000	**Fertile population:** 36%
Depth: -200 to -1,200 m	**Mutant population:** 12%
Community type: multiple complexes and cliff-side city	

Florea is one of the main cities of the Hegemony. It is connected to Ozark and Clemt by tunnels. A tunnel connecting it directly to Bermuda is currently under construction. The cliff-side city is built on the Blake Threshold. It constantly struggles against the Burrowers. Several access wells lead up to the surface. Over half of the troops stationed in Florea are specialized in combat with the Burrowers and the surveillance of the surface sites. Many Hegemonic companies have their headquarters in the city. Florea is surrounded by hydroculture fields, farming areas, and factories. Research teams are frequently sent up to the sunken ruins of the ancient world that can be found to the west of Florea. This area is off-limits to the civilian population.

GUAMEA

Population: 1,400,000	**Fertile population:** 18%
Depth: -1,700 m	**Mutant population:** 20%
Community type: multiple complexes and 1 cliff-side city	

Guamea is also known as the "Little Equinox". It is not only a mining base, but it is a commercial city where merchants from all over the world meet and mingle. Smugglers are incredibly common. The security forces are less present here than in other Hegemonic cities. There are always dozens of commercial cruisers coming and going from the city's gigantic hangars. The Prism has a considerable number of agents deployed throughout the city's streets to seek out heretics, spies, and rebels. The city's governor is a former company director who is obsessed with developing the community's commerce. Rumor has it that he is due to be replaced soon by a military governor.

KERYSS

Population: 18 million	**Fertile population:** 43%
Depth: -5,200 to -5,700 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: multiple complexes, cliff-side towns, and cities	

Keryss is the combination of several cities spreading out over hundreds of kilometers to the north of the Bermuda Rise. It is probably one of the largest cities ever built. One of the cliff-side cities on the side of the Kelvin Seamount range houses the headquarters of the Patriarchs, whereas the hangars of the main ship construction factories are situated over 120 nautical miles away from there on the New England Seamounts. The city is connected to Bermuda, Ultar, Warton, and Tanez by several tunnels. It is central to the greatest Hegemonic companies and also its political and military power. For many years it has been at war with the Burrowers who attack the underground installations. There are several access routes from the city to the surface.

NOX

Population: 950,000	**Fertile population:** 4%
Depth:- 200 to -6,200 m	**Mutant population:** 48%
Community type: multiple complexes, 1 cliff-side city	

Nox is an extraction station similar to Clemt. However, the city also has research laboratories on the surface. If some rumors are to be believed, a number of mutants or dissidents could be exposed, without any protection, to the atmospheric conditions above ground on the small group of islands in the area, so that scientists can study the effects. Despite the fact that the authorities deny the existence of this kind of behavior, these rumors have caused a wave of ill sentiment among the population. Several mysterious "incidents" are said to have taken place in this sub-marine complex, linked to strange creatures escaped from the laboratories and to unidentified contaminations. The city is connected to Clemt and Guamea by tunnels. It is frequently put in quarantine.

OURGOR

Population: 338,000	**Fertile population:** 17%
Depth: -3,700 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: cliff-side city, multiple complexes	

At the frontier of the Hegemony, Ourgor is both an important military base and a commercial platform. Many transport and tourism companies have their headquarters there. The cliff-side city and the complexes dedicated to commerce and tourism are fairly pleasant places, and the police presence is discreet. Ourgor has several hydrothermal stations. The city is connected to Feora, Ultar, and Ariadne (Equinox) by underwater tunnels.

OZARK

Population: 900,000	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -400 to -1,700 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: cliff-side city	

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Ozark is a city similar to Florea, to which it is connected by an underwater tunnel. The rebel movements against the Patriarchs are particularly active in this area. The Hegemonic security services are therefore reinforced throughout the region.

RAUXE

Population: 500,000	**Fertile population:** 6%
Depth: -1,200 m	**Mutant population:** 37%
Community type: multiple complexes, 1 cliff-side city	

Rauxe is the border city of the Hegemony that controls the Panama Passage. In addition to its defense forces, it is often supported by the Eighth Hegemonic Fleet. It also exploits several mines that can reach depths of up to 8,000 meters. It is essentially a military and industrial city governed by martial law. The whole of the Panama Passage region is constantly patrolled and covered by a network of detection stations and automatic gun turrets.

TANEZ

Population: 375,000	**Fertile population:** 18%
Depth: -3,200 to -4,700 m	**Mutant population:** 4%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Tanez controls some energy extraction stations and exploits several hydroculture stations and farms. Some rumors suggest that this Hegemonic community may also be one of the main centers for military research. Tanez is made up of a network of complexes that spread out over several square kilometers. The population here has a little more space than elsewhere. It is relatively difficult to obtain an authorization to travel to this community. Any visitors that do manage to travel there are closely watched.

ULTAR

Population: 750,000	**Fertile population:** 8%
Depth: -4,960 m	**Mutant population:** 25%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Ultar is in charge of controlling the energy-extraction stations along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. As well as being one of the main sources of hydrothermal energy, Ultar also runs enormous hydroculture stations and farms around the area's fracture zones. All of this makes it a very important group of complexes for the Hegemony. Recently, several strange phenomena have been observed near the extraction sites. After a series of violent seismic tremors, one of the stations reported it was being attacked by something coming from the rift on which it was working. The station was then completely annihilated. Units from the Ninth Hegemonic Fleet were immediately sent to the site to investigate. Several reports from other stations also mention strange movements in their extraction zones. Ultar is connected to Feora and Keryss by underwater tunnels.

WARTON

Population: 1,000,000	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -100 to -400 m	**Mutant population:** 17%
Community type: multiple complexes, 1 cliff-side city	

Warton is one of the most beautiful cities of the Hegemony. It is a huge economic and industrial center. The city does not, however, have any facilities for the transformation of metals (molecular steel, Plastitanium, etc.). For the last few years, the city has been the victim of particularly intense Burrower attacks. Furthermore, because of its shallow depth, it has been severely damaged by surface phenomena. Several domes are currently under construction to protect the stations and the key hydroculture fields and farms. The city is connected to the surface by several tunnels. Part of the garrison is assigned to the surveillance of the surface sites. The city's governor is a moderate person, who is said to be very tolerant of free speech. The agents of the Prism are particularly interested in this city, as it could be harboring a large network supporting the rebel, Telma Tiltane. The city is linked to Keryss by a transport tunnel.

YUCATA

Population: 600,000	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -250 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: multiple complexes	

This industrial city harnesses the resources of the Gulf of Mexico. It is entirely focused on production and there are no amenities for leisure of any kind. Yucata is also the location of one of the rare penal colonies in the Hegemony. It is the home port of the few prison ships still used by the authorities.

RED LEAGUE

GEOGRAPHY

The League controls the whole of the territory along the west coast of what used to be South America. The limits of its territory are Carnegie Peak in the north, Cape Horn in the south, the East Pacific Rise in the west, and the coast of the dry land to the east. Its territory is not very well equipped with communication stations. The borders are watched by a few fluctuating fortresses, but mostly by static detection bases and large surveillance squadrons.

HISTORY

The Red League was established in 302, as a reaction against the expansion policy of the Hatteras community. At that point, it united all of the smaller states along the east and west coasts of South America.

Led by its charismatic creator, Paul Devraverit, the small Falklands community would soon inspire one of the largest alliances in known history to bring the Hatteran steamroller

Evan Riley Klavatier (Order - 46797870)

to a halt. The Red League was born in the middle of a war. Its military forces were, at first, very limited. Most of the vessels were patched-up cruisers and huge squadrons of vessels thrown together from random parts, meant only to launch a few torpedoes before they fell apart. During the 30 years of the war, the League showed incredible ingenuity and courage to stop Hatteran progression. To resist the crushing firepower of the enemy ships, the citizens of the League invented cunning boarding techniques, the first of their kind in the area of sub-marine warfare, and they soon became masters in the art of surprise attacks. For example, it was the Red League's engineers who perfected the first Tarantula-, Manta-, and Sleeper-type vessels. By the end of the first terrible war in which the League took part, it had lost more than a third of its territory, but had managed to paralyze the gigantic Hatteran war machine. The League's greatest victory was to successfully form a new and viable alliance.

In the year 339, the war was over and all the communities that had joined the League pondered the need to remain united. Devraverit had died without leaving a successor and everything he had built was on the brink of falling apart. It was at this point that Bjorn Urik, one of the heroes of the war, called for a great council to be held to decide if the League was or was not viable. This meeting was held in the small base of Nazca, which would later become the capital of the League.

When the ambassadors discovered how much the League had helped each individual community to progress both technologically and economically, the answer became clear to all. The Red League had to continue, and Bjorn Urik was to be its leader.

So it was that in the year 340 a new state was formed. This state would become the greatest enemy of the Hegemony. The first decision made by Urik was to rebuild the economic and industrial structure of his realm, while at the same time maintaining a reasonable military force. The economic renovation succeeded far beyond his hopes; however, the military forces continued to suffer for many years from many weaknesses. The cruisers were old and their technology out of date. Everything was makeshift and patched up. Between 356 and 360, a vast program was carried out to refit the fleet. Without quite equaling the power of the Hatterans, the League still managed to put together a respectable armada of cruisers.

The army was not the League's states' main concern at that time. Those last years of peace had led to an incredible leap forward in the economy, and to the development of mining activities. However, two major problems remained a threat to the balance of society: food supplies and—most importantly—the national birth rate, which had been falling year by year as fertile humans became more and more rare. A solution was found for the dwindling food supplies through an artful negotiation with the mysterious Coral Republic. The second problem proved to be far more delicate. Urik launched a vast research program on the issue of genetic degeneration. He also ordered the demobilization of any fertile citizens and began a policy to encourage family development. The largest families could earn bonuses and land as well as special rights. This policy seemed to help maintain a respectable birth rate for about a century, when things suddenly took a turn for the worse. At the end of the year 360, an old and tired Bjorn Urik retired, naming his son as his successor. Groendald, the embodiment of his father, came to power on the eve of the first discovery of several Genetician depots by Hatteras.

Groendald and the leaders of hundreds of other communities were convinced that these depots contained terrible secrets, but most importantly the cure for genetic degeneration and the sterility virus. They decided to attack and put an end to the Hegemony's tyranny once and for all. Unfortunately, the superiority in numbers of the Hegemonic army, and especially the quality of their equipment, made all the difference. After a few hopeful months, during which the Hatteran armies experienced crushing defeats, the tide turned. The attackers' equipment was archaic and dysfunctional and they couldn't hold out for long. A year later, the new Hatteran prototypes completely reversed the situation. Nazca was bombed and hundreds of breeding couples were kidnapped by the enemy troops. The war was cut short and an armistice was signed at the end of the year. Groendald slipped slowly into insanity after his wife and children were all either killed or taken by the Hatterans.

The Red League survived this terrible defeat and went on to lead a surprisingly effective resistance against the new Hegemony. Using guerilla warfare techniques, Groendald and his troops continued to harass their opponent's fleet. He also ordered that all the League's production bases submit to Hegemonic orders to avoid being destroyed. Finally, he managed to convince several pirate realms to form a temporary alliance with the League. For the Hegemony, the situation soon became difficult. Its armada was not designed to put up with this type of resistance. Its supply lines soon became disrupted, and multiple terrorist attacks and a growing wave of underground resistance in its new territories combined to undermine its supremacy.

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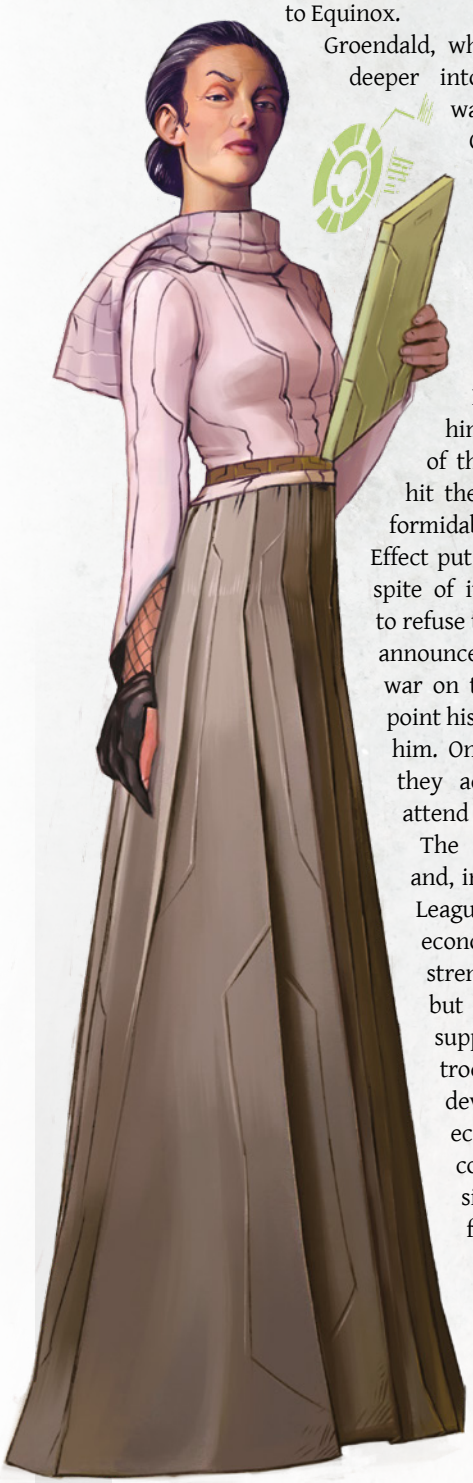
In the year 373, after interminable negotiations, the Coral Republic agreed to form an alliance with the Red League. The Hegemony then faced a new enemy, whose unusual combat techniques and tactical vision caused the Hegemony to suffer many crushing defeats. The Red League soon recovered its old territories and gained new factories equipped with modern Hegemonic technology. Groendald pushed his troops to continue the offensive. In 375, the war became bogged down, and the Great Admiral of the Coral Republic's fleet summoned the admirals of the principal nations to Equinox.

Groendald, who was falling deeper and deeper into the grip of paranoia, was convinced that the Coral Republic planned to eliminate all the key military leaders in order to enslave all the other nations. Against the guidance of all his generals, he secretly contacted the High Admiral of the Hegemony and offered him an opportunity to get rid of this Cult of the Trident and hit the Coral Republic hard. The formidable power of the Polaris Effect put an end to this attempt. In spite of it all, Groendald continued to refuse to sign the peace treaty and announced that he wanted to declare war on the Coral Republic. At this point his generals decided to depose him. Once they had taken power, they accepted the invitation to attend the "Admirals' Council".

The peace treaty was signed and, in just one century, the Red League became a formidable economic power. Its military strength remained average, but it could now count on the support of many mercenary troops. As a rich state, it developed its industrial and economic activities. In 468, a commercial agreement was signed with the Hegemony, first and foremost allowing the return of a young officer, Aaron Urik, the great-grandson of Groendald, born and raised in the Hegemony. Aaron came to power six years later and immediately began to negotiate the conditions of a closer relationship with the Hegemony.



Alma Terrack

It was at the beginning of the sixth century that the League would face its greatest problem: sterility. The devastating effects of the past wars and the deportation of fertile individuals by the Hegemony doomed the League to disappear if a solution wasn't found quickly. By the year 566 this solution still eluded them. In spite of its powerful economic situation, the League did not want to enforce a drastic repopulation policy. Its population grew older, and its stations devoid of youngsters. Kahn, the son and heir of Aaron Urik, was powerless to stop this situation.

In 567 the League's intelligence services became convinced that the Hegemony was about to attack. Following the guidance of Karl Edgesteel, the Great Admiral of the fleet, They launched Operation Minos. This operation aimed to make a strike at the Hegemony by way of the surface. Fortunately, the tension suddenly dropped a notch a few weeks later. However, even today, the First Citizen, leader of the Red League, no longer believes in the Hegemony's desire for peace, nor in the tales of terrorists invented by the diplomats. The Red League is preparing to go to war.

SOCIETY

The Red League is an aging society. The problem of the decreasing birth rate has become an obsession for its population. The state counts 22 million citizens with only an inadequate minority of fertile individuals. Births are the occasion for great celebrations and fertile citizens are protected and honored. Although they are far from the suffocating policies of the Hegemony, these citizens are still subject to a number of obligations. They are kept as far as possible from any activity or domain that may be considered dangerous. Serving in the army is, of course, forbidden to them. It is important to understand that the Red League is willing to go to any lengths to find a solution to this situation. It is suspected to be financing the activities of several pirate groups who specialize in the kidnapping of fertile people. The state also spends considerable sums on genetic and medical research, mainly focused on understanding why the human race is fading away. The Red League's citizens enjoy better freedoms than in other nations, but the specter of death weighs heavily upon them. The Cult of the Trident is particularly well established and youth is treasured and envied. Many opposition movements call for a birth policy as rigorous as the one imposed by the Hegemony, but the state has always refused.

The League is a rich state. Thanks to enormous underwater resources, mainly tri-terranium and Cylast, it is the richest state on Earth. Its commercial fleets are gigantic. It also has the largest number of installations on the surface, even though they do not have the same level of protection as those owned by the Hegemony.

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The power is held by the Parliament of the League, consisting of one representative per federated community. This parliament is represented by its spokesman, the First Citizen, Commander of the Armed Forces: Khan Urik. He is the most important person in the state, as long as his actions are approved by the Parliament. He decides the state's diplomatic and political policies. In case of war, he automatically assumes full powers.

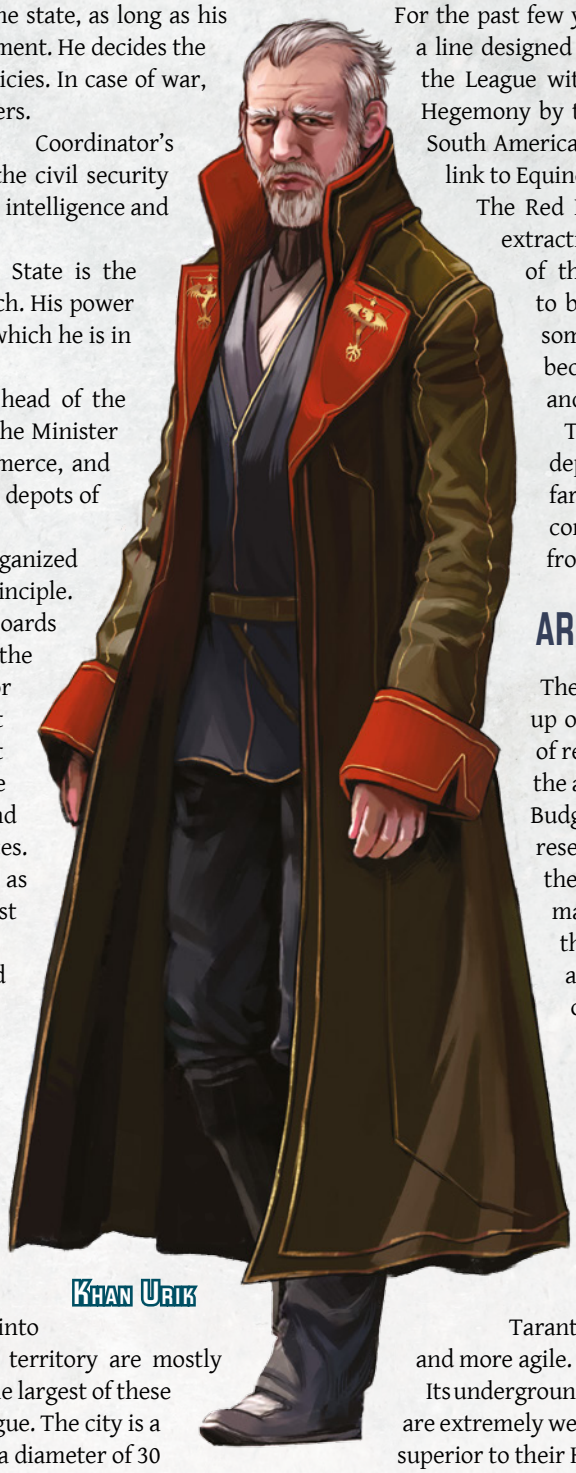
National security is the Coordinator's responsibility. That official leads the civil security services, the Red Guard, and all the intelligence and counter-espionage services.

Another powerful figure of the State is the Magiar, who is in charge of research. His power is as impressive as the services of which he is in charge.

The Great Procurator is at the head of the legal services of the Red League. The Minister is in charge of industry and commerce, and especially the search for the secret depots of the Empire of the Geneticians.

The League's society is organized according to a relatively simple principle. The largest companies and their boards of directors are at the top of the hierarchy. Then come the senior executives and managers. The vast majority of the population is part of the middle classes who ensure the companies are fully staffed and make up the bulk of the armed forces. The poor and the destitute form, as they do in most societies, the lowest category of the population.

Fertile individuals and mercenaries are different cases altogether. They inspire both respect and envy.



Khan Urik

TERRITORY

The main cities of the Red League are built into the underwater slopes of the Andes mountain range. Most of these cities are built straight into the rock. The other cities in the territory are mostly conventional underwater bases. The largest of these is Nazca, the capital of the Red League. The city is a gigantic structure spread out over a diameter of 30 kilometers, with 6 outer levels and 12 underground levels. Around its edge are hangars for the civilian and commercial transport companies, military bases, and the nation's only great hydroculture fields. The League has not developed the covered transport routes favored by the Hegemony. It only has four underground routes that connect its main cities. These routes are dug deep into the bedrock and along them run several freight lines, a civilian transport line, and two ultrahigh-speed public transport lines.

For the past few years, construction has begun on a line designed to link the northernmost city of the League with the southernmost city of the Hegemony by tunneling under the landmass of South America. The ultimate goal is to create a link to Equinox.

The Red League owns a large number of extraction and drilling sites. The whole of the Peruvian Trench has proven to be rich in mineral resources, and some of the abyssal plains have become key sources of tri-terranium and Cylast.

The League is almost completely deprived of hydroculture and farming activity. It relies upon the considerable food supply imports from the Coral Republic.

ARMED FORCES

The League's regular army is made up of older cruisers in varying states of repair. Some of the vessels still use the antique propeller engine systems. Budgetary cuts in favor of genetic research have done much to weaken the League's own military power. It makes up for this weakness with the number of cruisers it owns, and most of all by the companies of mercenaries it employs. The League only owns a few fighters and heavy cruisers. It prefers to deploy a considerable quantity of escorts and frigates. Its sub-marine infantry troops are the usual kind. It does not have many vehicles for interventions on the seafloor, and prefers the Manta and Tarantula units, which are much faster and more agile.

Its underground and dry land intervention troops are extremely well equipped and comparable if not superior to their Hegemonic counterparts.

There are very few arms factories in the League. Its equipment is, therefore, often secondhand. Recently, the parliament decided to purchase several ultramodern cruisers from the Coral Republic.

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PERSONALITIES

Khan Urik: At the age of 71, Khan is the most powerful person in the League. He is a reasonable man who is obsessed with the degeneration of humanity and the search for a sterility cure. He does not consider the Hegemony as a perpetual enemy, as long as it renounces its dreams of expansion. Recent reports from his spies brought to his attention that a pirate, Seyard the Damned, could well have critical information about genetic degeneration. Urik wants to get his hands on this man at all costs.

Veliador Viper: This young 31-year-old man is seen as Urik's natural successor. His uncanny leadership abilities, his strong character, and the fact that he is fertile—and therefore able to produce a lineage—make him a perfect candidate. Some say, however, that his intentions are anything but pacifist and that he is a megalomaniac. He is part of the Cult of the Trident.

Alma Terrack: This 60-year-old woman is the head of Cliastro, the largest mining company in the League, and is therefore incredibly influential. She is, however, suspected of being linked to a number of pirate and raider groups.

Kaleed Gradest: A youngster of only 16 years, his intellectual capacity is virtually unbelievable. He is one of the leaders of the Renaissance research project, studying sterility. He is the best-protected citizen of the whole League, having already been the target of many kidnapping attempts.

Olaf Faltor: The ambassador of the League on Equinox is a mutant. Despite being born without eyes and suffering from hideous physical defects, he is extremely well respected. His concept of a united humanity has earned him the support of numerous communities. He is a remarkable diplomat whose voice has an almost hypnotic quality. He is especially talented at distinguishing the truth and lies in any speech. It is said that his blindness has allowed him to develop other gifts.

Karl Edgesteel: He is the Great Admiral of the League and spends his time asking for larger budgets for the army. He is not the least taken in by the pretense that the Hegemony has abandoned its expansion plans. He is suspected of conspiring against the powers that be and of doing everything in his power to provoke a diplomatic incident with the Hegemony. Regardless, the First Citizen seems to be leaning closer to the Great Admiral's point of view and the two men are often seen together.

MAIN CITIES

CHILOE	
Population: 650,000	**Fertile population:** 13%
Depth: -286 m	**Mutant population:** 56%
Community type: complexes	

Chiloe is made up of a myriad of small stations, all located at a shallow depth. They are situated above the Peru-Chili Trench. The main function of this city is to exploit the magma in the faults at the bottom of the trench and on the surface. It also runs the dozens of energy-harvesting stations that move along the Chile Ridge several hundreds of kilometers away. The stations are less at risk than other cities in terms of Burrower attacks, but they are still a target for the many aquatic and amphibious predators that abound in the area. This network of complexes is linked to Leis and Cruz by underground tunnels. The city's largest problem comes from the large numbers of mutants in its population. This number is consistently increasing for unknown reasons.

CRUZ	
Population: 192,000	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -456 m	**Mutant population:** 29%
Community type: cliff-side city	

Cruz is Oneral's twin city and has the same exact characteristics. Some say that several Proteus have infiltrated the city and now hold key positions in the

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hierarchy. Whether or not that rumor is justified, the city's security forces have been on edge for several months, and visitors are interrogated at great length. This would suggest that the problem has probably more to do with spy activity than the Proteus. The city is linked to Chiloe and Oneral by underground tunnels.

LEIS

Population: 880,000	**Fertile population:** 16%
Depth: -6,000 m	**Mutant population:** 28%
Community type: cliff-side city	

Leis, much like Nazca and Chiloe, is a huge industrial city built on the sunken slopes of the Andes mountain range. A sizeable part of the city is built underground, where the battles against the Burrowers are intense. Several access wells lead up to the surface to ensure the surveillance of the Red League's automated factories. Leis is a dark and dreary industrial town. The people who live there work hard. Most of the League's commercial companies are based there. It is linked to Chiloe, Oneral, and Nazca by underground tunnels.

NAZCA

Population: 13 million	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -2,000 to -7,600 m	**Mutant population:** 30%
Community type: cliff-side cities	

Nazca is the capital of the Red League. It is built in part on the sunken slopes of the Andes, and spreads out all the way to the other side of the Peru-Chili Trench, where a gigantic structure (30 kilometers across) and ranges of hangars and hydroculture fields have been established. The trench can reach depths of up to 18,000 meters (average depth: 8,000 m). It is in these trenches that the richest veins of Cylast and tri-terranium were discovered and exploited by the League. The city is constantly in conflict with the Burrowers that abound in the area. Specialized troops do their best to keep the creatures at bay, but they do not have equipment as sophisticated as the Hegemonic troops. Underground tunnels connect Nazca to Leis and Oneral.

"The vessels of the League? Nothing but a bunch of shoddy trash cans, so noisy you could hear them coming a hundred nautical miles away. No, it's not so much the League's fleet that I am wary of, but men who are capable of staying half-buried in the seabed for days on end, in antique machines, and then jump out at you when you least expect it. I admire the soldiers of the League... "

-- High Admiral Viramis

ONERAL

Population: 160,000	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -856 m	**Mutant population:** 12%
Community type: cliff-side city	

Built into the cliffs of what used to be San Felix Island, Oneral is a gigantic industrial city. It operates mines that reach down to a depth of 10,000 meters. The whole region is covered in small mining stations. The city is also where many of the League's companies have their headquarters. Oneral is linked to Cruz and Leis by very deep underground tunnels. Life in this city is far from pleasant. Everything is gray, cold, and in a bad state of repair. Visitors are usually greeted with a great deal of courtesy and warmth.

VRAMA

Population: 86,000

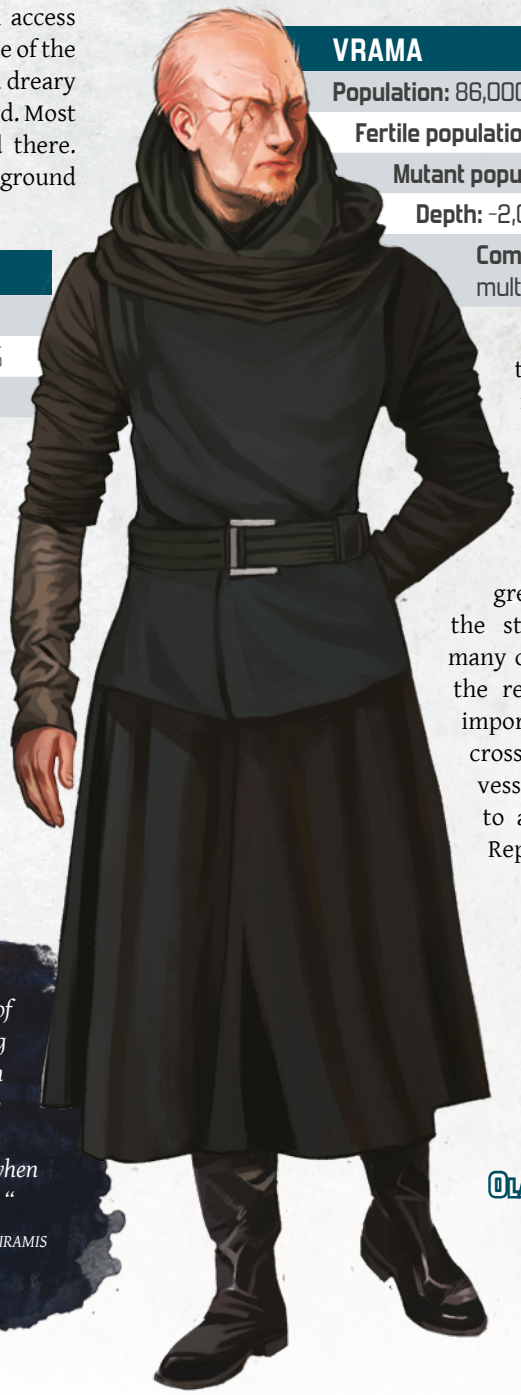
Fertile population: 10%

Mutant population: 23%

Depth: -2,050 m

Community type: multiple complexes

Vrama controls the dozens of energy installations that move up and down the fracture zones and ridges in the area. This industrial city's greatest problem is the struggle against the many creatures that haunt the region. It is also an important commercial crossroads for all the vessels on their way to and from the Coral Republic.



Olaf Faltor

Evlen Riley Klavatter (Order #6797870)

THE POLAR ALLIANCE

GEOGRAPHY

The Alliance extends over the whole zone outlined by the Laptev and Chukchi Seas and the Canada Abyssal Plain. This territory has almost no coverage by communication stations and its boundaries only become apparent in the vicinity of a few fixed detection bases.

SHORT HISTORY

It's in the utmost secrecy that this nation is born at the beginning of the 6th century. Until 512, it was no more than the dream of a madman, Paul Quercy, who was exploring a faraway and little known region that everyone considered barely exploitable. Yet the little community succeeded at exploiting rich deposits of tri-terranium. This let them eke out a meager living in an environment devoid of arable zones, where no agriculture was possible. In the year 400, Quercy made an astonishing discovery on the Arlis Range—these undersea mountains housed a cavern of colossal proportions where life had miraculously developed. This underground universe centered on a lake where marine mammals congregated and reproduced.

The cavern extended for tens of kilometers and contained astonishing light- and oxygen-producing vegetation. The area was immediately colonized by the community who, in less than two centuries, transformed it into a veritable garden. Thanks to gigantic projectors and advanced agricultural techniques, the community was able to reconstitute a semblance of primitive life. Cohabitation with the sea mammals was very tense at first but the colonists made friends and, eventually, formed a real mutual accord.

In 408, researchers from the community were alarmed to discover that the mysterious plants were, in fact, semi-organic machines, products of the Genetician Empire's science. They also discovered that the cavern was situated atop a depot dedicated to biomechanical research and artificial intelligence. The discovery has allowed researchers to build androids and cyborgs since 543.

Over a century, the community secretly developed its strength and technology around its capital, Arlis. Several peripheral communities joined with it and, in 512, formed the Polar Alliance, directed by Primarch Alexander.

For more than 50 years, the Alliance kept to itself. But in 568, it is almost certain that it sided with the Hegemony to participate in the invasion of the Coral Republic. One of its fleets was defeated by the pirates at the Battle of Lau-Havre Trough. Moreover, the so-called Exeter Directive attack to be coordintated with the Hegemonians was abruptly canceled. The Primarch did not at all appreciate that turn of events, and there remains today a great deal of tension between the Alliance and the Hegemony.

Recently, one of the Alliance's fleets was entirely annihilated by the Leviathan Community, after having violated its territorial waters. Even if the Alliance is at fault in this story, the Primarch will not rule out taking a measure of retribution.

SOCIETY

The Alliance counts roughly 2 million souls who accept the authority of a sole leader. Six hundred thousand chosen ones can reside in the Alliance's capital. These chosen ones form the upper class and are, as a general rule, fertile people or scientists. Life in the capital is obviously different than one led in the rest of the territory.

All the political, economic, and military power is concentrated in Arlis, in the hands of the Primarch and his counselors. The whole of the fertile population lives on the surface, in the splendid garden of the Alliance. The other members of the upper class only rarely leave their underground laboratories where they make decisions regarding their society's direction.

Although the birthrate problem is obviously worrying, it is not yet considered the Alliance's biggest challenge. The rate of population growth is considered satisfactory. In the heart of the Alliance, mutants and political opponents are rejected. They are, at best, enrolled in the extraction teams or conscripted into the army: the unlucky ones are banished to the surface. The brutal way in which some people are treated leads directly to part of the population's discontent.

People without the luck to be among the chosen ones don't have access to the capital, live instead in the few undersea cities of the Polar Alliance. In exchange for the protection of the Primarch and the help brought by his androids and cyborgs, they maintain the status quo. They live modestly, assured of the upkeep of extraction sites and maintenance of economic exchanges with other nations. The great majority of the population does not have access to the very high levels of technology or comfort that Hegemony members enjoy. They survive thanks more to their own resourcefulness than from rations offered by the Primarch!

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Paolus

Professor Helm Garrad

Alpha

The Alliance's androids are everywhere, assisting its leadership at the polar bases. They also serve as a security force.

TERRITORY

There are only eight major undersea cities and about thirty mining bases in the whole territory.

The capital city was built in the heart of the undersea mountain of Arlis, and is comprised of two distinct levels. The surface level is occupied by the fabulous garden of the Alliance. The homes there are low and offer every technological comfort. The inhabitants devote themselves to only three things: maintaining the territory's birthrate, agricultural efforts, and the maintenance of the cavern. The underground lake houses many species of marine mammals who live in perfect harmony with the rest of the population.

The capital's second level is underground. This is where the Alliance's great research centers and accommodations for the Primarch and his counselors are located. No one from outside the city has ever had access to these underground sectors.

One can only access the capital through two undersea tunnels that measure a hundred meters in diameter. These 12-kilometer-long tunnels contains a number of defensive mechanisms.

The border of the Arlis Range is occupied by multiple defense stations, military bases, industrial factories, and undersea hangars.

The Alliance's other cities and installations are distributed across the whole territory, and are built like conventional undersea bases.

The main resources targeted by the extraction factories are the important mines of Cylast and the oil fields that abound in the sector.

ARMED FORCES

The Alliance's military power is greatly reduced, but it possesses two substantial advantages. First, the capital is virtually invulnerable. The only two access tunnels are equipped with numerous defense systems that would annihilate any enemy force seeking to venture there. The military bases that surround Arlis are equally formidable defenses. Second, the Polar Army's biggest advantage lies with their massive use of combat androids as well as their special units made up of cyborgs. They are present aboard all Alliance ships, where they coordinate defenses, execute orders without asking questions, and, above all, quickly respond to enemy strategies. The Polar Alliance cruisers are smaller than those of other nations but they are generally more heavily armed in proportion to their size. The Polar nation also deploys frigates in a special division, the Spectra Division, whose teams are entirely comprised of cyborgs, meaning there are less problems with pressure or oxygen.

The androids and cyborgs are also used as infantry, sometimes in surprising shapes. The heavy cruisers, *Vulcan*-class, are rarer, with fewer than 10 ships in the Polar Army's fleet. They act as bombardiers and flagships. Each heavy cruiser is at the center of a combat group charged with patrolling one of the 10 regions of the Alliance. It is always accompanied by an escort of 6 *Starlight*-class destroyers and 12 *Wraith* frigates. Each combat group is completed by troop transports and fighter-drone deployment units.

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Ember Krystchef

The fleet officers always come from the Alliance's chosen ones. The bulk of the troops are either volunteers or mutants. The Alliance's military power is rounded out by several mercenary units stationed at the most distant bases.

PERSONALITIES

Primarch Alexander: Supreme leader of the Polar Alliance, Primarch Alexander has not appeared in public for over 10 years. He lives locked away in the underground part of Arlis, communicating his wishes through his intermediaries: androids or the Scientific Council. The Primarch is a true despot who accepts no opposition. The other states are very distrustful of him.

Alpha: This is the primary android that communicates the wishes of the Primarch to the people. It lives among the surface elite who consider it the true master of the Polar Alliance. Its appearance is perfectly human but, notably, it never exhibits any emotion.

Ember Krystchef: The Commander of the Alliance Fleet is an ex-mercenary soldier in his forties. Krystchef is an excellent officer and a fine strategist. His main problem stems from the androids, whom he considers cannon fodder. The Primarch, meanwhile, appears to remain deaf to his recommendations against their use. Ember has already shoved eight androids assigned to him out the airlock of his flagship.

Paolus: He is the "human" ambassador of the Polar Alliance on Equinox. Some question his humanity, though, because the man is imperturbable, only rarely showing his emotions. He always remains very unobtrusive.

Professor Helm Garrad: He is responsible for all the intelligence and counter-espionage services of the Alliance. He is also charged with driving out and eradicating any subversion in the territory. Garrad is a detestable man in his fifties who is truly hated by all who meet him.

MAJOR CITIES

ARLIS

Population: 900,000	**Fertile population:** 49%
Depth: -2,200 m	**Mutant population:** 0.00%
Community type: Underground city	

Capital of the Polar Alliance, access to Arlis is forbidden to strangers. Its defensive installations are formidable. The city is reserved for the upper class. Several dozen species of marine mammals, with the exception of orcas, come to reproduce in the mountain's great lakes. Some time ago, many of the Burrower tribes attacked the capital. The Primarch delegated an emissary from the Hegemony to obtain weapons for the underground battle.

BARROW

Population: 60,000	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -250 m	**Mutant population:** 34%
Community type: Multiple complexes	

This city is similar to Leonid. However, citizens of Barrow have a better standard of living as a result of frequent commercial exchanges with the Hegemony, which is based here. The presence of androids and cyborgs is discrete and strangers are welcome.

IAGNA

Population: 300,000	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -225 m to -350 m	**Mutant population:** 20%
Community type: Multiple complexes	

Like all frontier towns in the Alliance, Iagna is a network of dreary and sinister complexes. Its inhabitants only live there to work beneath the impassive regard of management and security androids. Iagna has no tourist attractions. The mutants there are treated like animals in spite of the protests of a part of the population. A rebellion movement is said to be rising in the region.

LEONID

Population: 48,000	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -250 m to -350 m	**Mutant population:** 42%
Community type: Multiple complexes	

Leonid is primarily charged with surveillance of the Bering Strait (where four Polar defense stations are located), as well as the maintenance of the region's surface sites. Some rumors say that mutants, criminals, and political opponents are sent outside with minimal protection.

OURSA

Population: 36,000	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -225 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: Multiple complexes	

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Oursa is a classic Polar Alliance city. Recently, a rebellion was crushed there. Certain reports put forward an important regrouping of Polar naval forces in the sector. Diplomats have sworn that these are just maneuvers, but despite their efforts, tension is mounting in the region.

SIBERIA	
Population: 65,000	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -300 to -350 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: Multiple complexes	

This average Polar Alliance community is at war with several orca clans in the region. At the moment, the marine mammals have a net advantage but this could change very rapidly with the arrival of Spectra Division units. The S.M.S.O. addressed an official request to other members of the Council, so the Polar Alliance will suffer sanctions for having attacked the orcas.

THE CORAL REPUBLIC

GEOGRAPHY

The Coral Republic extends all around the ancient Australian continent. Its frontiers are bounded to the west by the Wharton Basin, to the north by the islands of the Pacific Ring of Fire, to the east by the New Hebrides Gap, and to the south by the Southeast Indian Ridge. The territory also encompasses many sunken Australian lands. The whole of the sector is full of modern communications stations. Its frontiers are only monitored by a few fixed detection bases. The coral covers the whole Australian plateau as well as its immediate periphery, extending over the flooded lands. The greatest concentration is situated in the Coral Sea.

SHORT HISTORY

The Coral Republic dates back to the great age of the Azure Alliance, of which it was the capital. Rich in hydroculture and undersea farming, the Republic is dominated by a prolific coral that has adapted to feed off the ultraviolet rays of the sun, which had been fatal to it in a distant past. The Republic is certainly the most livable marine region. After the fall of the Genetician Empire, the Azure Alliance established its capital, Azuria, in the Coral Sea. It remains one of the most beautiful undersea cities to this day.

Once the Azure Alliance disintegrated, the creation of the sovereign nation of Coral was immediately decreed and the Republic closed in on itself, refusing to take part in any conflicts. As a result, the Republic was forced to face a problem that it had previously avoided for years by interfering in the affairs of other states: plunderers and pirates. Indeed, the "forest" of mountains in the Pacific was the prized home of dozens of small kingdoms that survived by looting and attacking convoys. Until 268, the Republic suffered terrible losses before its natural protection, the cultivated coral fields, had grown enough to work as protection. It was in 268 that the High Council of the Republic could fight fire with fire against the audacious people that dared attack its ships and cities, naming one of their own as leader of the Coral Fleet, which was almost non-existent until then. William Gallasteno received full powers. He was an old pirate himself, who knew their combat techniques well. He went on to reform the Republic's armed forces and structured them in small, swift combat groups, only allowing heavy cruisers the job of protecting large cities. He also encouraged the creation of the first major mercenary groups, offering several small pirate kingdoms the option to fight for him in exchange for food and industrial resources. Within 10 years, Gallasteno reduced the number of enemy raids in Republic territory to a quarter of the previous numbers, and wiped out 15 pirate kingdoms.

His multiple successes and rough charisma earned him a nomination as Council president in 282, at the age of 59. During this time, the first pirate alliance was born, with the goal of seizing the rich coral fields. The sea floor was rocked by violent wars among several communities, wars that threatened the existence of the plunderers' mini-states and pushed them inexorably into the Republic.

The first decision of this pirate alliance was to share information from their various intelligence resources. In 284, Gallasteno, five Council members, and two admirals were assassinated. Six days later, the pirate horde swept down into the Coral Republic. The war would last 12 years, resulting in terrible devastation. The pirates looted, killed, and massacred shamelessly. Azuria was annihilated and several coral fields disappeared.

On February 12, 296, a very strange phenomenon occurred. The pirate fleets suffered attacks, the source of which they were unable to discern. Their transmissions were jammed and their sensors neutralized. Soon, they discovered with horror that the coral fields were disrupting all of their systems. Helpless to defend themselves, the pirates suffered defeat after defeat. Their fleets were forced to retreat, powerless in the face of this force. After

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12 years of war, almost nothing was left of the Republic, but the Coraleans remained hopeful and began reconstruction. Since this era, they have maintained a special relationship with the Coral and the few who are capable of interpreting its messages have taken charge of the community.

The Coral Republic spent more than 30 years rebuilding what had been destroyed. From the year 330 on, it regained its previous commercial activity, and reestablished its cultivation and its hydrocultures. The capital, Azuria, was rebuilt. The Coral regenerated and offered the community ideal protection. In 336, the new Council president, Alec Fanstorm, made contact with several smaller communities and proposed that they sign agreements for economic exchange and mutual protection. Indeed, the Republic rarely exploits its underground resources and lacks raw materials.

In 333, through its intermediary spokesperson, the Coral announced that it could not actively sustain its defense of the territory for much longer. Fanstorm mounted a vast rearmament project to reconstruct the fleet. Meanwhile, he opened the doors of the Republic to several mercenary units. This would become an excellent contribution to the evolution of the society, whose members rarely encountered people from outside. In 345, the politics of repopulation, decreed after the end of the war, yielded its results. The Republic's population had always been prone to sterility and degeneration but it seemed less affected than the rest of the world.

The defensive field generated by the Coral diminished until, in 359, it reached its current level. Fourteen years went by before the Republic fleet was rebuilt. While not the most modern, it has the power to repel an invasion with the support of the mercenary units.

Alec Fanstorm left his position, handing it over to a young mutant, Helena Triasse. She encouraged genetic research to augment the number of girls born, the growth of embryos in an artificial medium, and the cloning of fertile individuals. At the same time, certain researchers, following the directions of the sentient Coral, managed to graft it onto organic and inorganic elements. These two factors would profoundly influence Coralian society.

First, there was an unprecedented demographic explosion that had not been seen since the discovery of the causes of degeneration, an explosion characterized by a very large population of women who were also mutants. Sadly, at the dawn of the seventh century, these excellent results would not suffice to ensure the survival of humanity.

However, the coral transplants would revolutionize all aspects of life. The army, for instance, would go to work reinforcing its cruisers' defenses and, more importantly, their sensory and jamming systems. The application of this medical technique allowed for a revolution in the treatment of fractures and bone implants. Corals appear throughout undersea stations, in the streets and the homes, as air purifiers or living decorations. Some people even agree to become hosts to the Coral. The latest fashion today is to have a shoulder, forearm, or neckline decorated with a fine layer of Coral. Today, in 566, the coral's versatility is central to life within this Republic.

Laelia Trenton

In 360, economic treaties were ratified between the Coral Republic and the Red League. These treaties allowed the Republic to obtain the raw materials they lacked, and moreover to learn much from the League about extraction techniques. Solid ties were formed between the two nations that would lead to the Coralian forces fighting together with the League against the Hegemony. These ties were broken in 375. Exasperated by the paranoia of the League's leader, demoralized by the need to fight the pirate kingdoms, and disgusted by massacres, Admiral Piotr Devrac, with the agreement of the Parliament, decided to join the Cult of the Trident and to make them a famous proposal.

To this day, no one knows what tie, if there even was one, existed between the Coral Republic and the Cult of the Trident, which had never been until that moment one of the major cults of the Coraleans. Be that as it may, the admiral's gamble paid off.

The years that followed were only troubled by a few raids against the Republic's installations. As they were no longer as well protected by the coral fields, these installations attracted the greed of looters, although they carefully avoided attacking with too many troops or damaging the Coral. This was because the Coral increasingly resembled a sleeping dragon. If they did not wake it, there was no problem; they just had to adapt to its light secondary effects. This flaw would be amply exploited by the entire rabble under the seas. The situation still persists today, as the Republic has not found an effective way to fight it.

During this century and a half of relative peace, the Coraleans have turned themselves into the true breadbasket of the undersea world. They have also developed their mining facilities and, since the beginning of the sixth

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century, they have restarted several heavy mining bases on the surface. In 544, Laelia Trenton, a mutant, was elected to the Council presidency. She turned her political will toward the economic and cultural exchanges among the various nations. She is at the heart of the resolution of the Equinox Council to propose a union of nations to more effectively combat piracy.

In 568, several small incidents threatened the equilibrium of the Republic, which many factions and nations still watch today with uncertainty.

First, a strange story is being told in the commercial ports, about the pirate Red Hand Meslar. He is said to have made a strange discovery after boarding a Coralian ship chartered by the company Palia. Today, this pirate is actively sought by Coralian authorities and the ship, along with all the evidence it contained, has been destroyed. People talk more and more about strange cloning experiments resulting from the use of Coral, and this unsettles many of the intelligence services throughout the whole world.

Another troubling development is the role of the genetic research company Palia and its ties to several buccaneers and the famous corporation Cortex. Its leaders pay a fortune to the vilest pirates under the seas for human test subjects. The experiments performed by these companies are particularly mysterious.

Finally, at the end of the year 568, a bizarre illness made its appearance in the Republic's commercial ports. Several people were found completely dried out after having been victims of what appeared to be accelerated aging.

SOCIETY

The Coralian society is one of the most fascinating to have sprung up on the sea floor. Its population is primarily comprised of women, and more than a third of its 127 million inhabitants are mutants. It also possesses the strongest growth rate of all the undersea nations, even though this remains thoroughly insufficient to predict the future with certainty. The relationship that links the population with the sentient coral fields is the strangest characteristic of the Coral Republic. The upper class is effectively comprised of individuals who possess a kind of empathic link with the Coral.

The Republic is directed by a parliament that elects a president. The parliament decides all the general positions of the Republic. The governors of each city must enforce its recommendations but they are allowed to act as they wish for the rest of their administration. For this reason, the Republic's cities are varied, since they conform to the ideals put in place by their governors. The empaths who form the upper class only have a consulting role in society. They don't have any specific political powers. Their opinion is given much attention, but they cannot impose any laws.

Security, espionage, and counter-espionage are centralized in the Intelligence Bureau, whose action department, Fragment, is particularly well known. All research on food and medical production are organized into the Special Research Department, which is one of the most important departments. It is charged to keep the Coral Republic the world leader in those two fields. The army and military research are the business of the Polyphemus Department, which is the least supported by the parliament. The External Relations Department also manages dealings with other nations and the administration of the many mercenary groups present in the territory. Finally, the Genetics Division is in charge of genetic research and control of the population's birthrate.

The life of the average citizen is rather pleasant. They don't have access to a very high level of technology in their daily life, but they have enough to eat, have access to a top-performing medical system, and do not suffer under a dictatorship. Women form a significant majority, but this does not seem to bother the population of men, who are largely polygamous. Mutants are on equal footing with the rest of the population.

The greatest problem in this society is a steady growth in crime, often blamed on the cultural mixing with other communities and nations.

TERRITORY

The Coral Republic possesses the most beautiful cities of the undersea world, of which Azuria is the jewel. The capital is not protected by a dome. It is, in part, built into the Coral, which modified the city's structure to create large white towers designed by Coralian engineers. This blend of organic and artificial structures is absolutely magnificent to behold. When one arrives for the first time at Azuria, one has the feeling of having discovered a fantastical city that escaped from

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forgotten legends, a vertiginous forest whose peaks culminate several dozen meters below the surface. Everything there is vividly lit by coral emanations or the multiple transparent windows of the inhabitants' homes. Plentiful flora and fauna give the impression that the city itself is a living thing. The various buildings of Azuria are all linked by an important underground network that constitutes a second city, but also by footbridges of sorts erected between the towers. In the surrounding area, one can find fields of hydroculture and farming that extend further than the eye can see, military bases, and transit hangars for prestigious tourism or industrial businesses.

Other Coralian cities are more traditional. They are often built into the abyssal walls, where they resemble multiple undersea stations. There are 28 sizeable cities, 100 minor towns, and innumerable farming and hydroculture stations listed.

Coralia Deventris

Republic territory is partly covered by the Coral. This acts as a defensive shield against external phenomena that might threaten the many developed cultures at shallow depth, especially the ultraviolet rays of the sun. This Coral has mutated over the course of millennia. It is endowed with a kind of empathic consciousness. It can grow at amazing depths in the absence of sunlight, as long as it is connected to a section that is bathed by UV rays. It also possesses the strange ability to emit energy discharges, generating a defensive field that jams enemy electronic equipment. It can also graft itself onto any structure.

ARMED FORCES

The Coralian fleet suffered during the wars against the Hegemony and the pirates. It is relatively small, comprised mainly of light vessels bought from foreign states and modified by Republic technicians. These modifications are basically Coral grafts on the internal walls of the vessels.

Its infantry is limited to the bare necessities, and underwater commandos are primarily equipped with secondhand or salvaged weapons. The Coraleans count on the Coral and the mercenary troops to ensure their protection. This policy has largely revealed its limitations and the Parliament plans to rethink the territory's defense.

PERSONALITIES

Laelia Trenton: President of the Parliament, this 50-year-old mutant suffers from multiple deformities that do not yet affect her performance as leader of the nation. She always appears dressed in a long black outfit and masked face. Born without a voice box, she is accompanied by her personal interpreter, an attractive 31-year-old woman. Trenton is respected by the people. They have never brought her power into question, recognizing in her a driven visionary who is well acquainted with their concerns.

Alcinia Berrevris: The primary empathic communicator with the Coral, Alcinia is truly a living legend. Celebrated by the population and principal advisor to the Parliament, this 64-year-old woman possesses a great deal of influence.

Elmenear Calloway: High Admiral of the Coralian fleet, Elmenear is a mutant born with only one eye. Consistently claiming personal credit for the army's reorganization, he has been the source of recent Parliament decisions that agree with his opinion. At 51, this solid, hardened man is a ferocious supporter of the alliance among nations formed to put an end to piracy.

Coralia Deventris: The Republic ambassador to Equinox is a stunning 28-year-old woman whose body is partially covered by a thin layer of Coral. An excellent diplomat and a fine negotiator, she is particularly esteemed in the city of the Cult of the Trident.

MAJOR CITIES

ARCH	
Population: 9 million	**Fertile population:** 34 %
Depth: -255 m	**Mutant population:** 32%
Community type: Cliff-side city, multiple complexes	

Arch is a fortified city dedicated to the fight against pirates. The majority of its installations are underground or covered by protective shutters. Most of the punishing expeditions against the pirate nations originate from here. Recently, a violent earthquake damaged the majority of its complexes.

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AZURIA

Population: 27 million	**Fertile population:** 34%
Depth: -200 m	**Mutant population:** 41%
Community type: aquatic city	

The most beautiful of the cities built under the sea, Azuria is the pearl of the Coral Republic. It is one of those rare cities where one can see divers without any armor and admire the beauty of the undersea world without taking risks. It is visited by people from all over the world, at least by those who have the time and the means.

CAPE

Population: 834,000	**Fertile population:** 28%
Depth: -200 to -3,000 m	**Mutant population:** 39%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Cape is a military base in the fight against the pirates as well as a major commercial center. There have been substantial clashes with pirates in this region. The best-known commercial routes are constantly patrolled by Coralian ships.

CORALLIA

Population: 12 million	**Fertile population:** 29%
Depth: -100 m to -200 m	**Mutant population:** 49%
Community type: aquatic city	

Corallia is identical to Azuria, but much smaller. It is the home of the Republic's largest tourism and freight companies. Many unarmored divers and incredible multicolored fauna can be seen here.

DALE

Population: 8 million	**Fertile population:** 43%
Depth: -110 m to -200 m	**Mutant population:** 29%
Community type: 3 cliff-side cities, multiple complexes	

Dale is a very tourist-oriented city. It is not the prettiest Coralian city but it is quite pleasant to live in all the same. Many freight and travel companies are based there.

DRECH

Population: 2 million	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -255 m	**Mutant population:** 34%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Drech, an industrial city, was recently placed under quarantine because of an epidemic whose nature has not been revealed. The fourth Coralian armada deployed, encircling the city to prevent ships from entering or leaving the infected zone. The situation seems grave, all the more so because the ambassador from the Red League is said to be in the city at the moment.

ERCHEY

Population: 1 million	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -400 m	**Mutant population:** 42%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Erchey is the only city in the Republic that does not cultivate any hydroculture fields or make use of any farming. It is an industrial city entirely devoted to research, raw materials processing, and machine construction.

FASSAR

Population: 9 million	**Fertile population:** 27%
Depth: -150 m to -400 m	**Mutant population:** 32%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Fassar is an industrial city. It has nothing of interest for tourists. Lives here are similar to those led by people in other undersea installations. One can find training bases here for soldiers on the surface.

KAI

Population: 240,000	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -255 m to -1,200 m	**Mutant population:** 38%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Kai is a completely new city. It is still under construction. It was designed as a forward battle station against the pirate kingdoms. Thus, it is above all things a military base for the Coral Republic. The authorities are confronted by a sizeable problem: several plated sharks have settled in the region.

NUMENOR

Population: 7 million	**Fertile population:** 34%
Depth: -255 m	**Mutant population:** 53%
Community type: cliff-side city, complexes, and numerous underground installations	

Numenor is responsible for extraction of underground and surface resources. It comprises a cliff-side city, and a large network of complexes that also serve as a vast underground system. The war against the Burrowers rages in the city's operational mines and, frequently, entire sections are evacuated during Burrower attacks.

OJIAS

Population: 4 million	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -1,000 m	**Mutant population:** 49%
Community type: multiple complexes	

The last Coralian city before the eastern no-man's-land, Ojias is a huge commercial city. The zone within the following coordinates is one of the most dangerous in the undersea world: 160° E, 120° W, 80° S, and 40° N. Whirlpools, currents, marine monsters, shipwrecks, and pirates make this sector almost uninhabitable. It includes several hundred

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small, isolated, mostly underground communities that are for the most part smuggler dens, pirate bases, and secret stations belonging to other nations. There are numerous commercial routes that connect with the Red League. These routes are secured by ships belonging to the Watchers, the Coraleans, or the League. Ojias is comprised of complexes that are actually districts, each organized around an ethnic culture or an activity, like leisure, commerce, transportation, etc. Ojias exploits numerous mobile hydrothermal stations on the southern fracture zone.

STIRLING	
Population: 3,445,000	**Fertile population:** 39%
Depth: -90 m	**Mutant population:** 31%
Community type: Two cliff-side cities, multiple complexes	

Stirling is a typical city in the Coral Republic. It is close to the surface, with vast tracts of farming and hydroculture. As a primarily industrial city, Stirling cannot match Azuria's splendor but life there is fairly pleasant.

"When I close my eyes and I listen to the ocean, I can hear the melody of the Coral songs that protect this beautiful nation of the Coral Republic. When I watch the sea through one of Corallia's picture windows, I see one of humanity's most beautiful creations. Here, one truly has the feeling of being alive. However, for a little while now, I've felt uneasy. Something is amiss in the Coral Republic. I can't express exactly what, but I fear that certain appearances are just illusions."

– Message from a representative of the Cult of the Trident in Corallia, shortly before his disappearance

Jason Helio – Demeter

EQUINOX AND THE CULT OF THE TRIDENT

GEOGRAPHY

The city of Equinox is situated on the Rockhall Threshold. Its sovereign territory extends all around this area.

SHORT HISTORY

The first station on the Rockhall Threshold was built in the year 127. At the end of the year 251, a team of miners made a sensational discovery in a very deep Rockhall mineshaft. Several days after the workers climbed out of the mine, the first heat flow formed in the region. Some people thought that the miners had discovered a particularly extensive Genetician depot. In 256, the plateau's population united to form the community of Trident.

In the year 340, the Trident Alliance appeared on the scene. In 348, the first incident linked to the Polaris Effect caused the deaths of 112 people. In 349, the Alliance decided to build the neutral City of Equinox in the Ariadne Trench. The motivation for this choice was, twofold. First, the existence of a heat flow that would likely protect the city from any external aggression. Second, the local presence of many marine mammals that appear to be particularly friendly to the Trident community.

Thanks to the enormous resources available to the Trident Alliance, work began in the year 350. Materials arrived from all the oceanic communities who rallied to the cause. Rich industrialists invested unbelievable sums to create what seemed to be a utopia, a massive station spanning almost six kilometers, right in the middle of a heat flow. In 365, Equinox was completed and it was an instant success. Ships came from every horizon to visit this curiosity.

In 352, a certain Leori Arimatti advanced the hypothesis that certain individuals were able to unleash the Polaris Effect without being capable of controlling it.

In 373, Simon Arimatti created the Cult of the Trident for which he became the first Demeter. With the help of his friend, Admiral Piotr Devrac, he began a campaign aimed at reassuring the population and attracting investors. At the same time, Trident specialists, charged with discovering all who might possess the Polaris gift, were dispatched to every community in the undersea world.

The golden age of Equinox would flourish until 440. The S.M.S.O. was created, Ariadne became a center for genetic research and a haven for certain fertile people, the Watchers made their appearance, and the Cult of the Trident established the Sol as an international currency unit.

In 440, things got more complicated. A violent controversy challenged the leadership of the Cult of the Trident. They did not agree with the methods used to lead civilization toward a new golden age. Tristan Lesark, leader of the hard branch of the Cult, slammed the door and left Equinox with about 100

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of the faithful and several ships (for the most part, warships). Arimatti refused to stop the rebels for fear of triggering a conflict, a decision he would come to bitterly regret. In 448, the Black Sun made its appearance and attacked several installations of the Cult of the Trident. The war between these two factions would never cease.

In 560 Equinox became the most powerful city in history. Attracting a population from the whole world, it turned out to be the oceans' largest commercial and diplomatic center. But 2 million people could not live together without certain incidents occuring. Thus, the conflicts between rival communities were often settled in the city's passageways. They would have to wait for the Watchers to put a stop to these fights and make the city a little calmer.

From 567 to 568, a terrible war among spies struck Equinox, which would profoundly affect the security services of Trident and its director, Sernea.

SOCIETY

The Cult of the Trident is present in every community. It is, above all, a neutral organization that wants to halt humankind's slow extinction. Members of the cult can come from any nation. Men, women, and mutants are welcome without discrimination.

The order's hierarchy is dominated by several chosen ones who are capable, consciously or unconsciously, of manipulating the Polaris Effect. Those who do not control their gift wear an inhibitor device, a very thin metallic device worn at the back of the head, to avoid any risk of incident. They live permanently at the the city of Equinox's summit. Their task is religious and philosophical. They are guardians of the wisdom of the Cult, and the knowledge amassed by its members. Each member of the Cult receives a name that defines their rank in the hierarchy. Among the chosen ones, Demeter is the head of the cult; he is assisted by the six Prometheus, his private counselors. Next come the Janus and the Nemesis.

The great majority of the order's workforce, estimated at 25,000 people, has no ability linked to the Polaris Effect. These are the diplomats (the Orpheus), the administrators (the Lares), the scientists (the Vejovis), and the missionaries (the Hermes) of the Cult. They manage the city of Equinox, arbitrate the quarrels among states, and ensure that all the undersea powers submit to laws established by the S.M.S.O.

The only informal organization in the order is its intelligence service, the Neptune Division. Led by Sernea, one of Demeter's followers, this group is particularly powerful on Equinox, but less influential in the rest of the world. The Neptune Division specializes in counter-espionage. In fact, Equinox is the only place in the world where so many spies congregate from every corner of the planet. Attempts to infiltrate the cult are common, and the main work of Neptune is to discern the presence of traitors in the organization. Each novice is questioned by the Division before being accepted into the heart of the Trident. The Division's agents work strictly with the Watchers and the Janus.

The Cult of the Trident controls many important corporations: the gigantic Cortex, whose activities extends from making pharmaceutical products to developing gene therapies; the Hellion laboratories that make hybrids; the Aeris companies that possess the secret of hyperfluid; Gladius, the massive naval enterprise that makes monastery ships; and the Trident space agency, which is vital for the conquest of outer space. But the cult's biggest economic asset is Solaris, the company that makes the Sol and ensures distribution of this currency.

Fertile individuals, given over to the cult by undersea nations, live in the city of Ariadne, the second city that belongs to the order. They live there peaceably with access to all the resources of the modern world, under the protection of the Watchers. In exchange, they accept that they will be studied by cult researchers for whom the primary task is to find a cure for sterility.

The population of Equinox is estimated at 3 million inhabitants, from all corners of the world. They settled into different sectors of the city, generally near their respective embassies. They are, however, all ruled by the law of Equinox, which is enforced by the Watchers.

TERRITORY

The Cult of the Trident only possesses two cities, Equinox and Ariadne. Ariadne was also built on the Rockhall Plateau. It is an underground city that houses fertile individuals of the cult, and is defended by several Watcher stations set up in the surrounding areas. Ariadne also serves as a transit station for ships arriving at and leaving from Equinox. In fact, to be able to cross the flow without risk, it is necessary to navigate through the whirlpools created by the convergence of currents. These access tunnels are easy to spot by the city's control stations. At the approach of a ship, when one of these tunnels takes shape, city officials rush out an escort vessel charged with leading the ship to a safe harbor.

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Ariadne's transit sector only exists as structures built on the surface of the Rockhall Plateau. The underground complex is off limits and completely isolated.

The Cult of the Trident also controls several small stations in each of the world's seas.

Equinox is a fluctuating city—that is, its position on a vertical plane is never the same. It "fluctuates" with the currents, between -200 meters and -2,200 meters. It is a massive city, built in the form of an octahedron of titanic proportions. All around it, the sea is illuminated by its own light and those of the host of vessels that never stop coming and going. Thousands of whales, dolphins, and other marine mammals cavort in the surrounding waters.

The first thing one encounters in Equinox are the landing hangars situated all around the central sector. It is a truly impressive sight. One also realizes that a well-maintained is a rare thing on the oceans. As all the communities send representatives to Equinox at least once a year, one sees a range of rag-tag, patched-up vessels that by all rights should be in a junk yard.

The unloading sectors, most of the four-kilometer-diameter central level, and the six lower and higher levels, are gigantic markets where all the cultures mix together. They constitute Equinox's commercial sector. The streets are dark and very crowded. Merchants of all kinds can be found there, as well as workshops, casinos, bars, hotels, etc.

Certain zones in the commercial center are more respectable than others, but the atmosphere remains the same all over. The colonial representatives negotiate there for supplies, and you can trade goods for just about anything. This is the kingdom of smugglers and traffickers of all kinds. It is therefore somewhat ironic that the anti-piracy treaties were signed a few levels upstairs, knowing that many pirate kingdoms base their despicable trade right here in Equinox.

The Watchers in charge of keeping the peace on Equinox very rarely intervene in this sector, preferring that people handle their own business. Moreover, the central zone is a free zone where everything is allowed. Force is only employed if brawls or confrontations threaten the city itself. Therefore, it is not unusual to come across the occasional gunfight. Light arms are perfectly legal in this sector.

The four levels situated above the free zone are reserved for the embassies, around which are built various quarters and communities in the styles of those different nations. The most luxurious areas of the city can be found here.

The topmost part of the city houses the different commissions, the cult members' quarters, and the area reserved for the high priests of the Trident.

Equinox's technical personnel, the factories, and the defensive center of the city occupy the levels situated beneath the grand market.

ARMED FORCES

The Cult of the Trident does not maintain any armed forces. Its protection is ensured by the Watchers and, in the case of a disturbance, groups of mercenaries. Sources have claimed that the Neptune Division possesses combat capabilities but no one has been able to verify this assertion.

On the other hand, the Cult retains a fleet of enormous monastery vessels that patrol the seas, traveling from community to community. These ships are generally escorted by squadrons of Watchers and protected by a special group of priests: the Ordainers.

PERSONALITIES

Jason Helio (Demeter): At 113 years old, Jason is an enigma, even to his own entourage. Appearing to be entirely devoid of human feeling, it is said that he is haunted by an unknown past and by his ambiguous relations with the Other, the master of the Black Sun. He has perfect control over the Polaris Effect in all manifestations, and has experimented with talents unknown until now, like Foresight and Mind Control. His detractors accuse him of using the latter of these abilities to manipulate people he meets. He is always seen wearing his inhibitor, though in reality he has no real need for it.

The wildest rumors surround him. Some tell that he has attained such a degree of mastery of the Polaris Effect that the Other is merely a manifestation of his subconscious, the dark side of his personality. It is also said that Jason is in fact the person behind the enigmatic Shadow Ambassador or even

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that he may be a Genetician. No one reliably knows his deeper motives, except perhaps Sernea, the director of the Neptune Division, who is said to be very close to him. It is unknown whether Jason is sterile or if he has any descendants.

Jessica Melindros (Janus): She is the intermediary between the order's chosen ones and its other members. Melindros is a woman, 68 years old, who is known as a talented public speaker. She cannot control her gift for using the Polaris Effect.

Marcus Delvion (Orpheus): Delvion is the spokesperson for the Cult to other nations' ambassadors. He is one of the most skillful diplomats on Equinox and his intervention has helped to avert many conflicts.

Lopteros (Prometheus): Head of the neutral city of Equinox, Lopteros is a remarkable administrator who only thinks of the city's survival and the largest part of its population. Thus he is regularly brought in to make difficult decisions, which contributes to his image as a bloodthirsty monster. The order to incinerate a quarter with its whole population after the breakout of an epidemic in 560 and the bloody suppression of the panic in 564 are two examples of how he earned the nickname "the Butcher of Equinox." Despite this, Lopteros remains unflappable and, when asked if he regrets any of his actions, he responds that, if one day the management of the city would leave him enough time to ponder it, he would be overjoyed to give an answer on the subject. He is sterile and 92 years old.

STATIONS CONTROLLED BY THE CULT OF THE TRIDENT

CARION	
Population: 1,200	**Fertile Population:** 50%
Depth: -335 m	**Mutant Population:** 99%
Community type: 2 complexes	

This station is constantly guarded by Watcher ships, which only allow access to authorized personnel. This is an experimental community where extremely contagious patients are isolated, notably those who are affected by the Contagion mutation. The patients are left to themselves, and only have contact with the teams of doctors and genetic researchers who come to study them.

EQUINOX (ARIADNE)	
Population: variable	**Fertile Population:** variable/78%
Depth: variable/-6,900 m	**Mutant Population:** variable
Community type: 1 fluctuating city, 1 complex, several stations	

Equinox and Ariadne are the two official cities of the Cult of the Trident. But one must also add to them the innumerable secret stations, the Watcher bases, and all the communities that are under the guardianship of the Cult.

PENDEVEN	
Population: 200	**Fertile Population:** 19%
Depth: -3,400 m	**Mutant Population:** 2%
Community type: 1 complex	

Pendeven is a monastery station for the Cult of the Trident. This station is a kind of of resupplying port for the monastery ships. The Cult can also, from this base, be closer to the Pacific populations, but more importantly the Red League and the Hegemony. It is believed that beneath this complex, which is open to all, the Cult has set up large installations dedicated to genetic research, as well as a training center for monks and the Neptune Division. The station recently experienced attacks by an unknown aggressor. The impact is said to be unusually significant and a monastery ship suffered serious damage in the course of the attack.

THE MEDITERRANEAN UNION

GEOGRAPHY

The Union controls the whole of the region, including the Mediterranean and the Adriatic Seas. Its frontiers stretch up to the Black Sea in the north, to the Red Sea Rift in the south, and to the Straits of Gibraltar in the west. Three defense stations have been built to keep watch over these three borders.

HISTORY

Officially, the Union is a very recent nation created in the year 478. However, this coalition existed long before it was officially recognized. The communities established in the Mediterranean Basin have cooperated for centuries. It was therefore no surprise to anyone that they joined together to create what is considered today to be one of the states with the most promising future.

It was Omar Selanko who first proposed in 467 that the communities in the region unite. He was an entrepreneur from Galia who dreamed of having enough resources to undertake the great projects that he had imagined for many years. He had a good knowledge of the region's inhabitants and was convinced that they could accomplish great things if they united. But his dream soon ran up against a major obstacle. In the southern part of the Mediterranean, Baron Narwhal, a dictator of the lowest kind, ruled Calnais, the largest community at that time. He was opposed to any suggestions of unity and threatened to exterminate anyone who might accept it. As the head of a group of religious

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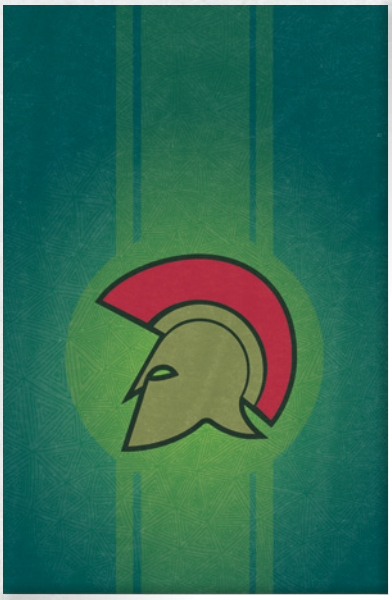
fanatics, the Celestial Voice (part of a much larger and more peaceful religion, the Heavenly Voice), the baron organized an attack on Omar's life that he miraculously survived. The assassins of the Celestial Voice were sent out to every community to intimidate their leaders. Narwhal then prepared for war, planning to crush the community of Galia.

In 469, one of Omar's spies learned the baron was about to launch a massive attack against Galia. Of particular concern, he was thought to have sent agents, carriers of a strange parasite, to every community in the region. Omar decided to act immediately. He sent out his own agents to the communities in question to uncover the baron's infected men and reveal Narwhal's sinister plans to the world. It was then discovered that Narwhal planned to take control of the leaders of every community through the introduction of symbiotic creatures that could completely remove a person's willpower.



The cities around the Mediterranean reacted immediately. They all came together to oppose the baron. During the Night of Heresy on March 26, 469, all the representatives of the Heavenly Voice were wiped out and fleets were sent to attack Calnais. The troops of this new union arrived at the exact moment when the baron's armies were preparing to invade. The battle was fierce, but after six days of fighting, Calnais was crushed.

The baron escaped and ran for his life. He was found a few days later near the city that is now Tamez. The temple of the Celestial Voice and a colony of strange parasites were later discovered in the ruins of an ancient surface city. The baron and his last remaining disciples were executed and the temple completely destroyed.

After that dark period, negotiations began to officially establish the creation of the fledgling union. However, once again Omar was confronted with the resistance of several communities. It was not until the Empire of Ziar (which at the time was comprised of the Rift States and the Kingdom of the Indus) threatened to invade that things finally came together. In 477, troops from Ziar crossed the border and attacked Clanaon, a small community on the frontier with the empire. Clanaon was completely destroyed, but once again the communities of the Mediterranean united and intervened to stop the invaders. A few months later, the Empire of Ziar fell apart and Omar was able to persuade his allies to unite as the Mediterranean Union. He would not live to see it. In 478, one week after Omar's death, the Union was officially formed. It immediately established an alliance with what remained of the Empire of Ziar and the Rift States.

From that point, the Union developed to be another of the world's nations. With Lesiur Narkal as its leader, it became one of the great underwater powers in less than a century.

In the year 543, Pietrich Van Dyn became the new leader and continued to implement the expansionist policy. In 568, the Union continues to surprise the rest of the world with its technological advances, its development, and its will to establish itself as a great nation. For example, its engineers were the first to perfect the supercavitation and hypercavitation technologies applied to torpedoes and shells. The other great nations, such as the Hegemony, have now come to realize that what they had at first considered to be a small and insignificant state may well become the leading world power.

Over the last few years, the Union has become completely infested with spies from other nations, eager to find out more about their research. Furthermore, there is a grave danger shadowing the Union. Some elements suggest that the parasites have returned and that the Church of the Prophet is none other than the Heavenly Voice reformed.

SOCIETY

The population of the Union is made up of particularly hard-working folk. Everything is done to encourage people to innovate and create. The government almost entirely funds any new communities that settle in its territory. It also uses all the ideas submitted by the population, even the most eccentric ones. This is how the Union came to develop fearsome supercavitation projectiles and the famous anti-field throwers. However, it also wastes a lot of money by financing some of the crazier projects.

The population continues to grow, attracting people from all over the world. Although this is a benefit for the country's economy, space is beginning to become a critical problem.

The Union is governed by a council made up of the commanders of the 26 founding communities. Pietrich Van Dyn is the president of the Council. He is a particularly charismatic person who is well respected by the whole population.

The Council makes all the important decisions and votes on the budget allocated to each ministry. There are over 38 ministries in the Union, the most important being the following:

- *Ministry of Research:* This is the largest ministry in the Union and certainly the most efficient. Its budget is colossal and is dedicated to funding all sectors of research, split into six main groups: the Synar Department covers genetic and pharmaceutical research, the Omar Department looks after industrial research, the Nexus Department is mainly dedicated to military research, the Antares Department is in charge of space

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Pietrich Van Dyn

Nez Dorir

Aea Tyss

research, the Yrix Department looks after electronics research, and last but not least, the Rea Department is specialized in hydroculture research.

- *Ministry of Industry:* The Ministry of Industry funds all the projects to exploit the Mediterranean Basin's resources.
- *Ministry of Colonization:* This ministry is in charge of funding new communities, but it also studies any opportunities to colonize the surface or the underground world.
- *Ministry of Defense:* This ministry distributes the budgets to the Union's various armed forces.
- *Ministry of Security:* Here you will find the Ulysses Division in charge of intelligence, the Agamemnon Division in charge of counter-espionage, and the Aea Division in charge of civil security.
- *Ministry of Education and Demographics:* Better known as Priapus, this ministry organizes the education system (mainly focused on science) and the reproduction programs.

Strictly speaking, there are no social classes in the Union. Although politicians and scientist dominate society, the only truly important condition is to be productive. Idleness is considered to be criminal in this society. Those who refuse to work are quite simply enlisted by force into the mining crews or the armed forces. Any mutant is tolerated for as long as he is useful to society. The others are used as test subjects. Any infant born an invalid is swiftly eliminated, while those no longer able to work due to an accident are allowed to end their days in institutions dedicated to their care.

All fertile men and women participate in a program that allows them to continue their work activities while contributing to the repopulation effort. They are not allowed to work in the more dangerous professions.

Children are taken into the care of the Ministry of Education at a very early age. They are tested to determine their abilities and, depending on the results, they are transferred to the companies that will educate them from the age of eight until adulthood.

TERRITORY

The Union's territory is rich in natural resources. It includes one of the largest oil deposits in the world, as well as large deposits of salt, gold, and Cylast. A wide variety of metals can also be found underground. Several automated factories have been built on the surface. The Union's main resources come from farming, hydroculture, the production of heavy fluid, and the production of its mines.

The nation has six major cities, including the capital, Neo-Troy, twenty or so smaller cities, and over sixty other communities. All these cities have limited living space for the populations, and have more in common with gigantic industrial areas than with more comfortable communities.

ARMED FORCES

The Union's army is split up into four main divisions.

The Heracles Division includes all of the nation's naval forces. It is small but well equipped and has a fleet of modern vessels.

The Achilles Division includes all the underground and aboveground intervention forces. It is currently the division with the largest part of the budget because of the Burrowers.

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The Perseus Division includes the Union's infantry troops and all the ocean-floor combat vehicles.

The *Aeneas Division* includes all of the special intervention services—the commandos, the saboteurs, and the assassins.

The Union's military force may not yet be able to compete with that of the other great nations, but the soldiers of its army are equipped with ultra-modern gear and they know how to use it.

PERSONALITIES

Pietrich Van Dyn: As the president of the Council for the last 25 years, Pietrich has always made the right decisions and it is partly thanks to him that the Union is so prosperous today. This 58-year-old man is still in great shape and bursting with ideas, but recently, he has seemed ill. Some say that he has caught a strange illness, or even that he may be the victim of a parasite. The Council is increasingly considering removing him from his position, regardless of the services he has accomplished for his country. Pietrich is well respected by the whole population.

Nez Dorir: Nez is a member of the Council and it is rumored that he would become Pietrich's successor if the president were to be dismissed. He is a cunning man in his fifties who some suspect of being linked to the Church of the Prophet.

Aea Tyss: She is the mysterious director of Mistral, the largest company in the Union. Mistral is the company responsible for perfecting the supercavitation torpedoes. Aea has never been seen in public, and some have openly doubted her very existence. Those who affirm they have met her described an especially beautiful and intelligent woman in her thirties. The only problem with that description is that it has been the same since the company was founded fifteen years ago.

MAIN CITIES

GALIA

Population: 500,000	**Fertile population:** 19%
Depth: -400 m to -1,700 m	**Mutant population:** 19%
Community type: Cliff-side city, 2 complexes	

Galia is one of the founding communities of the Mediterranean Union. It is primarily in charge of the maintenance of several factories on the surface. The city's council, who hires the services of raider communities, exploits the ancient ruins all around the city. The city's population lives in a cramped space. Each citizen has a minimal amount of living space. The fight against the Burrowers is the main preoccupation of Galia's governor. The Cylast and tri-terranium mines are down at a depth of 2,850 meters. Like all of the cities in the Union, Galia is subject to frequent attacks from the monsters living in the region.

KA

Population: 60,000	**Fertile population:** 37%
Depth: -200 m to -250 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Ka's territory is the Union's food store, covered with fields for agriculture and livestock. The vast majority of its population works in one of those two areas. There are also large laboratories for genetic and food research, and others for the research being led on the surface. Ka is also in charge of a small number of factories on the surface in the region. It is a very pleasant place to live where the population has more space (about 20 m² per inhabitant, which is more than five times the world's average).

NEO-TROY

Population: 100,000	**Fertile population:** 27%
Depth: -490 m	**Mutant population:** 12%
Community type: 2 cliff-side cities, multiple complexes	

Neo-Troy is the capital of the Union. The complexes and cities that make up the capital are prosperous. Neo-Troy is in charge of the maintenance of the surface stations in the surrounding area. The Council of the Union and all of the main Mediterranean companies are based in the city.

OMEROSS

Population: 50,000	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -1,700 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 4 complexes	

Omeross is the city at the border between the Union and the Atlantic Ocean. It is therefore both a stronghold and a commercial area. It is impossible to escape the detection devices in the Gibraltar Passage.

SYRTE

Population: 60,000	**Fertile population:** 17%
Depth: -3,900 m to -4,200 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: multiples complexes	

Syrte is a city much like many others that can be found in the Union. However, a rather specific cult has developed in this region. The Church of the Prophet was born here after the discovery of many relics of the ancient times in the area's ruins. Some say that the Prophet could be a Genetician, although few religious leaders concur. They believe that he is a spiritual guide incarnated on Earth to lead humanity back up to recapture the surface. The members of the Church are often scientists and scholars. It is also rumored that the Fellows of the Deep are strongly implanted in the region. The worshippers of the Church of the Prophet are the only ones to speak the strange language called Nezraisian. Traces of the same language were also found in the ruins.

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TAMEZ	
Population: 60,000	**Fertile population:** 16%
Depth: -2,990 m to -3,200 m	**Mutant population:** 14%
Community type: multiple complexes	

Tamez is a gigantic cluster of complexes mainly designed to transform raw materials. It is also the frontier city neighboring the Rift States.

THE MINOR POWERS

Most of the world's population lives in small communities that can vary in size from a few hundred to several thousand people. There are a multitude of these communities throughout the oceans though none can match the levels of resources that the great powers possess. Their main concerns are survival and finding the gear they require. Life in the smaller colonies is far from a fairy tale. Every year is spent looking for new veins to mine, dreaming of stumbling across a depot from the Empire of the Geneticians, or maybe seeing a few children born without the sterility virus. They battle constantly against raiders, sea monsters, and the many dangers of the oceans.

And yet, without these communities, the great nations could not survive. Although they are individually insignificant, put together, their production outweighs that of the larger states. Their collective military power is not to be dismissed lightly, either. The many mercenary forces have proved their usefulness and strength over and over again. Most importantly of all, these small communities are the ones who provide the larger states with an endless source of manpower when their own resources are not enough. Every day, hundreds of contracts for exploration, mining, or investigation are signed on Equinox. These arrangements benefit everyone and maintain the balance.

Some communities have come together to create small states, and their importance continues to grow. The role these states will play in future developments will be a key factor at a time when larger states are wavering. Here are a few of those communities:

AMAZONIA

This new nation's prosperity is due to its pharmaceutical industry. Amazonia remains a mystery for most people, and few have obtained an authorization to visit its territory. However, emissaries from the Cult of the Trident have been invited to the capital, Amazonia, where they met Basanf, the king of this mysterious realm. Nothing is known about the way of life of this nation's inhabitants or its social organization.

MAIN CITY

AMAZONIA	
Population: 36,000	**Fertile population:** 48%
Depth: -140 m	**Mutant population:** 20%
Community type: 18 complexes	

Completely unknown eight years ago, Amazonia was registered with the S.M.S.O. by its only delegate sent to Equinox, a certain Lavara Teknacos, who serves as a diplomat to the neutral city. Very few people have been granted access to the complexes of Amazonia. According to certain reports from the Watchers and from other spies, the installations are very close to the surface and the population mines veins of some kind of unknown diamond-like mineral. A powerful energy field protects this kingdom. Nobody knows anything about its nature. The priests of the Trident are not generally welcome there, and for some of them this would tend to imply that Amazonia is under the control of the Black Sun. The community also exploits hundreds of sites dating back to the ancient world. Their religion (the worship of Leziryss, a god with the body of a snake) and their language, Amanean, are both said to directly originate from relics found in the ruins. Nobody can yet explain how many Amazonian scholars can both understand and speak Arkonian. According to the Watchers, the main problem that this community encounters is the abundance of underwater and amphibian predators in the region. Last but not least, Amazonia has developed a range of plant-based pharmaceutical products that are in great demand by doctors all over the world.

THE ENDERBY CONFEDERATION

This confederation, a neighbor of New Lemuria, has grown from the sunken lands of Enderby all the way to the abyssal plain of the same name. These two communities have often come to blows over the exploitation of the abyssal resources, but recently, an agreement signed on Equinox with the arbitrage of the Cult of the Trident could well open up the possibility of an alliance between the two states. The Confederation is completely identical to New Lemuria. It is led by a woman named Emma Peterson.

MAIN CITY

CAPE CITY	
Population: 30,000	**Fertile population:** 14%
Depth: -2,100 m	**Mutant population:** 17%
Community type: 4 complexes	

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The Enderby Confederation only has four complexes that group together to form the capital, Cape City. The rest of its territory is covered with extraction stations. There is a strong rivalry between the Confederation and New Lemuria, but recent diplomatic agreements have led to the possibility of a lasting alliance that would merge the two nations into one larger state. Exploration teams sent aboveground to the lands of Enderby are said to have discovered the traces of a Genetician depot.

THE RIFT STATES

Wedged between the Kingdom of the Indus and the Mediterranean Union, the Rift States rule the whole of the Red Sea region, one of the richest in terms of livestock farming and hydroculture. Their relationship with their neighbors is perfectly cordial. Their population is estimated at a total of 28,000. The Rift States are run by a commission of productivity.

MAIN CITIES

OSSYR	
Population: 22,000	**Fertile population:** 37%
Depth: -300 m	**Mutant population:** 1%
Community type: cliff-side city, multiple complexes	

Ossyr is the "city of a thousand wonders." It is an incredible cliff-side city that spreads for kilometers down into the depths. The city offers every possible leisure activity to the rich tourists and merchants. It is also one of the largest commercial platforms in the world. The temple dedicated to Ossyr, the sun god worshipped in the state, is one of the wonders of the undersea world. The Rift population's mother tongue is Ossyrian.

ZIAR	
Population: 14,000	**Fertile population:** 13%
Depth: -665 m	**Mutant population:** 19%
Community type: 10 complexes	

Ziar is the second largest community in the Rift States. It has to call on a large amount of immigrant manpower to exploit all the riches of its territory. Ziar is mainly a community of traders and merchants. Most of the population, those born in the city, live in good conditions. This is not always the case for immigrant workers.

THE CAPE FEDERATION

The 34 communities spread out from the Walfisch Ridge to the Mozambique Slope united to form this federation. Out of all these communities, more than a third were bands of mercenaries, which explains the Federation's large fleet of vessels. Its population of 189,000 run the many gold and diamond mines situated very near the surface. Some teams even take turns on the coasts aboveground to mine a particularly rich vein of diamonds. These teams work in despicable conditions. The 12 cities built into the underwater cliffs are constantly harassed by the Burrowers who infest the region.

The Federation also has 24 underwater stations and a rudimentary arms factory. It has a few hydroculture fields and works very closely with a large community of dolphins. The Federation is led by Elliot Deminsk who is given the title of Supervisor.

MAIN CITIES

DRAKEN	
Population: 24,600	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -410 m	**Mutant population:** 13%
Community type: 4 cliff-side cities, multiple complexes	

Draken is a community of the Cape Federation and is made up of several cliff-side cities and underwater stations spread out over several square kilometers. The city also runs several sites aboveground, and therefore has a considerable amount of equipment for surface operations.

PITCAP	
Population: 52,300	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -230 m	**Mutant population:** 12%
Community type: 6 cliff-side cities, several domed complexes	

Pitcap is the capital of the Cape Federation. Its activity is mainly focused on the underground mines and the veins on the surface. The struggle against the Burrowers is a priority, and the Supervisor recently decided to invest in Hegemonic equipment to make the community's forces more efficient.

WALVIS	
Population: 40,200	**Fertile population:** 17%
Depth: -1,500 m	**Mutant population:** 34%
Community type: 4 cliff-side cities, multiple complexes	

Walvis is a member of the Cape Federation. It exploits the riches of the Cape Abyssal Plain. It is regularly attacked both by pirates and the Burrowers that are legion in the area.

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FUEGO LIBERDAD

Situated in the region between the Amazonian Cone and the Ceara Abyssal Plain, this small community of 34,000 souls is one of the most prosperous in the region. Although it mines a rich deposit of Cylast and several pockets of tri-terranium, its primary asset is its very high birthrate. The community owns fairly modern equipment and a few cobbled-together combat vessels. It is run by a council of shareholders made up of a few rich individuals who live on Equinox. The community's leader is called Cyrus Terling. Admiral Pellock is in charge of the community's defenses.

On June 23, 567, Fuego came under attack by a pirate fleet and had to request the assistance of the *Atlantis*. However, the Hegemonians did not simply come to the community's aid; they authoritatively placed it under their protection and raided the Genetician depot that had just been discovered by the miners. The incident was harshly criticized by the S.M.S.O. but there have been no further consequences.

MAIN CITY

FUEGO LIBERDAD	
Population: 34,600	**Fertile population:** 43%
Depth: -4,800 m	**Mutant population:** 18%
Community type: 1 main complex, multiple secondary installations	

Fuego Liberdad is a prosperous community that mines rich veins of Cylast and tri-terranium. It is still far from reaching its maximum level of productivity and it is very likely that it will expand in the coming years. Some rumors say that this community supports the pirate, Telkran Raljik. The community is made up of a main base and several other stations spread out over its claimed territory.

NEW LEMURIA

This small state developed near the Kerguelen Plateau. Its population is estimated at 28,000 people. Its main occupation is exploiting the mines of tri-terranium in the Enderby Abyssal Plain. Run by Karl Onstarberg, this is a small and prosperous community with three underwater stations, a small fleet of cruisers, and a few cobbled-together fighter vessels. The capital of New Lemuria is Lemuria.

MAIN CITIES

KERGUELEN	
Population: 8,000	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -1,600 m	**Mutant population:** 26%
Community type: 2 complexes	

Kerguelen is an industrial station that is completely focused on production. There is nothing in place to cater to visitors. The two complexes are cold and gray. Recently, huge whirlpools have formed in the area around the station. It is not known how or why, nor if this phenomenon will continue.

LEMURIA	
Population: 18,000	**Fertile population:** 28%
Depth: -410 m	**Mutant population:** 19%
Community type: 1 cliff-side city, 1 complex	

The capital of New Lemuria has just finished the construction of its cliff-side city, which now houses the Council's headquarters. This nation is growing slowly with no notable problems. It is actively fighting against pirates and helps the smaller communities when they are threatened by these predators.

RODHIA

Since a depot of the Azure Alliance was discovered, the community of Rhode has become the nation of Rodhia. It is developing economically and it attracts a large number of people from all over the world. Paul Gan, the previous president of the Council, was the victim of an accident that cost him his life. He was replaced by a man named Victorius who intends to turn his little nation into an important economic pillar by using the machines discovered in the depot. Representatives of the Cult of the Trident have become part of the Council, and it would seem that Rodhia would have trouble surviving without the Trident. Rodhia's military forces are almost nonexistent. The state mainly relies on mercenaries and on the Watchers for its defense.

MAIN CITY

RHODE	
Population: 12,900	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -1,560 m	**Mutant population:** 13%
Community type: 25 complexes	

After the discovery of the Azure Alliance depot, Rhode became a small state that grouped all the small communities in the area around it. The community of Rodhia is often threatened by pirates and rival communities, and it relies on the Watchers and

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several divisions of mercenaries to defend it. It is not yet known exactly what the depot contained, but the priests of the Trident have already done their best to control it exclusively.

KINGDOM OF THE INDUS

Situated in the area around the Indus Cone, this kingdom is blooming under the rule of a Hegemonic nobleman, Duke Pilar de Rochas. He has rebuilt a feudal society around his person and rules it like a lord. Today, the community counts a population of over 45,000 people making their living from livestock farming, hydroculture, and mining copper, gold, and Cylast. Its military power is virtually nonexistent. It prefers to hire the services of mercenary troops.

MAIN CITIES

KRYSS	
Population: 20,000	**Fertile population:** 29%
Depth: -215 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: 1 cliff-side city, multiple complexes	

Kryss is a typical city of the Kingdom of the Indus. The noble classes dominate a class of serfs with virtually no rights at all. The workers are given food and board in excellent conditions, but they have no freedom of speech whatsoever. The official language is Trashanes, a mixture of ancient Azuran, Arkonian, and a language of the ancient times. Many hallucinogenic drugs are also grown here, and they are sold all over the world to all sorts of people, from noble families to miners.

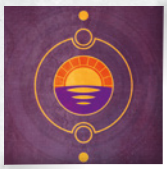
PUSHKAR	
Population: 32,000	**Fertile population:** 29%
Depth: -230 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: 2 cliff-side cities, multiple complexes	

Pushkar is the capital of the Kingdom of the Indus. It is also the headquarters of one of the largest cruise vessel companies—Delta-Oceanus— which owns a huge shipbuilding facility and offers its services to all civilian companies. The vessels it builds have the reputation of being the most comfortable in existence. Ashnir is the name of a secret cult that worships a reptilian creature. Its worshippers are constantly under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs and are excellent assassins with a worldwide reputation. Although the duke has officially outlawed this cult, he has never taken any real measures to wipe it out.

"Duke Pilar de Rochas? I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him. He is an insidious man. He is only interested in power and he is said to be linked to terrible cults. Some rumors say that he gets rid of his enemies by having them taken to the City of the Dead on the surface. And I won't even mention the Ashniri killers, soulless assassins as deadly as a conger eel. He may have outlawed the cult, but everyone knows that they work for him. Seriously, although he may seem benevolent, the duke is a dangerous man. It is even said that he is linked to the Geneticians!"

—A spy of the Cult of the Trident, returning from a mission in the Kingdom of the Indus.

IMPORTANT FACTIONS AND GROUPS



THE AZURE ALLIANCE

The members of the Azure Alliance have always believed that the Geneticians could return to our world. Therefore, its leaders created depots in which they stored automated war machines and where the great heroes of the war against the Empire of Evil now sleep. Nothing is known about these personalities.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE WATCHERS

The Watchers are known throughout every ocean on the planet, and not always in a good way. Although they are officially neutral and operate on the orders of the S.M.S.O., this international unit works hand in hand with the Cult of the Trident. The Watchers were originally founded to create a sort of underwater police force. Its tasks were to check that the directives of the S.M.S.O. were followed in the seas around the globe, and mostly to arbitrate conflicts, even if that meant intervening directly between fighting parties. These missions are followed for the most part, although it is apparent that this organization is in fact the Trident's private army.

In the year 566, the Watchers formed an elite corps whose missions are varied: enforce the wishes of the S.M.S.O., arbitrate conflicts, escort merchant and tourist vessels, protect the space launch sites in the Appalachian Mountains and in the Guyana Highlands, ensure the security of Equinox, protect the more isolated communities from the pirate hordes, etc. The organization performs these duties as well as possible, given that nowadays a large portion of its assests are solely dedicated to serving the will of the Trident.

Recruitment: Not just anybody can become a Watcher. Most of them are individuals from all walks of life who come to offer their application at one of the recruitment centers.

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The others come from military schools around the world and are delegated by their nation to the international corps. Each state submits a list of candidates to the leaders of the organization, where it is studied with the utmost attention by the specialists from the Cult of the Trident and the officers of the Fellowship. Only the very best are selected. Obviously, it is clear that among the crowds of candidates, a certain number are spies sent to infiltrate the Watchers. It is for this reason that each candidate is scrutinized and that all new recruits undergo a severe training course for a year, the aim of which is to root out subversive elements. Cases of treason and espionage are extremely rare in the Fellowship of the Watchers. This is mainly due to the fact that the new recruits are first and foremost selected based on their motivations. Indeed, the vast majority of the organization's members are convinced of the crusade's legitimacy. They truly believe in an international order and are generally close to the ideals of the Cult of the Trident. It is also whispered in the taverns of Equinox that the Watchers are subjected to brainwashing techniques, perfected by the priests of the Trident, to assure their fidelity. Although there is no proof to support this accusation, it is still easy to see that the troops are incredibly faithful to their leaders and extremely united with each other, even though they are very different folk from all over the world.

The numbers of the Fellowship are estimated at around 300,000 individuals. Each soldier signs a five-year contract when he enlists, renewable at the end of each period.

The security forces: On Equinox, the Watchers are mainly in charge of maintaining the order and protection of the city. They police the walkways of the neutral city. A force of 14,000 men has the responsibility of keeping the peace on Ariadne and on the multiple levels of the fluctuating city. Their leader is Colonel Palance, a 56-year-old man close to Lopteros (find more information about Ariadne and Lopteros in the Equinox sourcebook). He is a seasoned soldier who knows how to get the very best out of his troops. The main mission of the Watchers on Equinox is not so much to protect the citizens, but to protect the city from any dangerous actions by its population. They are therefore polite, friendly, and helpful people, but they will not hesitate to take down anyone who threatens the proper workings of the city. So the Watchers are mainly stationed in the more sensitive areas: the unloading hangars, glass viewing bays, the generators, etc. A Watcher's standard equipment does not usually include any lethal weapons. They are equipped with Mao truncheons and incapacitating weapons, but as soon as danger is detected, assault rifles and thermal lances appear in their hands as if by magic.

Anti-riot forces: One of the greatest dangers that could threaten the security of an underwater station full of people is a sudden unified movement in a crowd. Intentional riots are rare and quickly repressed by the intervention of the Condor Faction, but crowd surges due to panic are more frequent and harder to contain. Panic is very much like a forest fire and spreads just as quickly. The mission of the Watchers' anti-riot forces is to prevent this kind of event at all costs. If their intervention is not enough, the Condor Faction is sent in to deal with the problem.

A mass panic can be triggered by pretty much anything. The most frequent causes are the use of firearms in the middle of a crowd, a fire, or signs of flooding. It is also possible that a person who is—or just looks—sick, can make people take flight (contagious illnesses are a real phobia for the population). When that happens, the anti-riot troops are immediately called in. They are usually well-built soldiers equipped with anti-shock armor, intimidating helmets with black visors, and shields with an electrified surface. They all carry Mao truncheons, but always use sonic incapacitators, shock rifles, or shock grenades. Any incident of panic must be isolated as quickly as possible. Therefore, the security forces close off the affected area as quickly as they can, calm the crowds (usually by force), and only then tend to the wounded. If their intervention is not enough, the Condor Faction arrives. This anti-riot group is led by Major Fianna Liparsky, a 46-year-old woman with a steely stare. It is rumored she is fertile.

The Condor Faction: This group is tasked with intervening in cases of severe danger. Epidemics, riots, various catastrophes, terrorism, and otherwise uncontrollable mass panic are among the triggering factors for the immediate deployment of the Condor Plan. The Condor units are equipped with combat armor. When they arrive on the scene of a disturbance, the very sight of their black outfits, decorated with a flaming bird with its wings spread wide, is often enough to calm the more agitated rioters. If that isn't enough, whatever the problem is, it will be dealt with by neutralizing—often definitively—any opposing parties. The Condor Faction only obeys the orders of Colonel Palance.

The hygiene services: the Hygiene and Epidemic Control Services are one of the most feared by the populations of Equinox and all other cities. Hygiene and disease control are absolute priorities in the confined world of an underwater station. Because of this, the hygiene services have absolute power in this particular field. The population often gives this service's headquarters a wide berth, for it is said that those who enter them stand a good chance of never leaving them again.

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Healthcare is provided for free by the hygiene services, but the slightest trace of infection can prove to be fatal for the patient.

The employees of this organization work on several levels. Prevention is the first of their concerns. They are present in every aspect of education and training to teach people about the dangers of diseases and epidemics. They also have a surveillance role and they patrol the streets of Equinox on the lookout for any individual who may look like the carrier of infectious germs. Additionally, the services have an intervention group ready to act efficiently in case contamination becomes a risk. Last but not least, the Incinerators are in charge of the radical treatment of any epidemic risk. This squadron is especially feared for obvious reasons reflected by their name. The hygiene services are controlled by Doctor Lena Temis, a 32-year-old sterile woman.

The emergency services: The Watchers are not only instruments of merciless repression. The emergency services are in charge of helping the population in case of fire, flooding, explosions, etc. This service has all the equipment necessary to efficiently deal with these various catastrophes. They also have a medical service in charge of treating victims. This division is the most popular one with the population. A 38-year-old sterile man, Lieutenant Peter Davis, runs the emergency services.

The army: Approximately 180,000 men and women serve in the army of the Watchers. They are spread out onboard the Fellowship's vessels, in the defense stations of Equinox, and at the site in the Appalachian Mountains and in the Guyana Highlands. These soldiers are particularly well trained and completely devoted to the cause of both the Fellowship and the Cult of the Trident.

Soldiers: The bulk of the armed forces are made up of soldiers between the ages of 24 and 34. They are divided into several categories:

- *Scion Division:* These units make up the crews of the vessels.
- *Fighters:* The pilots of the underwater fighter vessels.
- *Marine Commandos:* They specialize in the use of underwater combat armor.
- *Dawn Division:* They are specialized in operations both underground and aboveground.
- *Intervention Division:* These are the Watchers' elite troops, specialized in close combat on station walkways.
- *Cyclops Division:* They form the crew of the combat stations.
- *Space Division:* They are in charge of the surveillance of the launch site in the Appalachian Mountains, in the Guyana Highlands, and maintain order on the orbital stations.

Major: A major is in charge of a squadron of 20 soldiers, 10 armored commandos or 5 underwater fighters.

Lieutenant: Lieutenants are in charge of combat groups of about 200 individuals. They can also be assigned to a specific service or the direction of a combat station.

Captain: Captains are responsible for a vessel.

Colonel: A colonel is assigned to the head of a division made up of 5 to 20 combat groups.

Squadron Admiral: He or she is in charge of a squadron of vessels (see Fleet organization).

Admiral: Admirals are in charge of a specific geographic area and command all the vessels deployed in that area. There are six fleets of Fellowship vessels, and therefore six admirals.

Admiral in Chief: Len Veria is the Admiral in Chief of the Watcher fleets. He is permanently in contact with Demeter.

Special Intervention Group: The Watchers have several special unit types that make up the S.I.G.

- *Hybrids:* The Hybrids produced by the Cult of the Trident are part of an intervention group that proves especially useful in deep waters. They take part in all the deep-water operations and form a group of especially efficient saboteurs. They work with dolphins. Lieutenant Jessica Xe, a 28-year-old Natural Hybrid, commands them.
- *The S.W.O.R.D. (or Sword):* The Special Warfare Operations and Recon Department is a group of commandos specialized in sabotage and eliminations of any kind. It is led by Ulorf Grender,56, a former pirate.
- *Astra Division:* These Watchers form an elite group, specially trained in combat in the void of space. They are, of course, trained on board the orbital stations.
- *Shadow Division:* This is the intelligence and infiltration division of the Fellowship.

Researchers: The Watchers are also active in terms of research, even though they are focused on arms development. They work hand in hand with specialists from the Cult of the Trident.

Civilian vessels: The Fellowship owns a number of unarmed vessels used for rescue operations. Almost all of these vessels were built by the company Gladius. The fleet is made up of 8 Archangel-class hospital vessels. These ships weigh in at 35,000 metric tons and are 125 meters long. Each of them is capable of housing over 500 patients onboard and deploying advanced medical bases on stations hit by disaster.

The Watchers also use 10 Dolphin rescue vessels. These ships are used to evacuate the crews of stranded vessels. They are 60 meters long and can descend to depths of 18,000 meters.

Behemoths are vessels capable of transporting wrecked ships. The Fellowship owns two of these oddly shaped, 120,000 metric ton monsters. They look like hollow half-pipes.

Finally, the Fellowship also owns around 30 Korems—armored vessels designed to transport troops and vehicles on the seafloor.

Fleet organization: The Fellowship has six combat fleets. The first four are organized into squadrons. Each squadron is made up in the same fashion.

- *1st squadron:* Interception squadron, including 5 escort vessels and 20 heavy combat fighters.
- *2nd squadron:* Surveillance squadron, including 2 escort vessels, 40 light fighters, and 1 frigate.
- *3rd squadron:* Rapid intervention squadron, including 2 frigates and 1 cruiser.

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- *4th squadron:* Protection squadron, deployed near sensitive areas (Equinox, for example). It is made up of 4 frigates, 1 cruiser, and 1 battleship.
- *5th squadron:* Intervention squadron, including 6 frigates, 2 cruisers, and 1 battleship.
- *6th squadron:* Flagship squadron including the fleet's flagship (usually a battleship), 1 battleship, 4 cruisers, 8 frigates, and 20 escort vessels.

The 5th fleet is made up of individual units, escort vessels, or frigates, in charge of patrolling and visiting isolated communities. They are, in a way, the police of the high seas. The 5th fleet is said to have around 40 vessels.

The 6th fleet is solely assigned to escorting merchant and tourist vessels. It includes roughly 40 vessels, frigates, escort vessels, and a few cruisers.

The flagship of the fleets is a vessel, designed especially for the Fellowship. This huge vessel is called the *Vigilant*. A second flagship, the *Valliant*, has just been launched.

THE GENETICIANS

Little is known about the Geneticians, and yet their shadow is everpresent in the universe of the *Polaris RPG*.

There are 24 known Geneticians: 12 Creators, 6 Destroyers, and 6 Renegades. The most well-known are Cyrull the Creator, Nellion the Designer, Masenya the Founder, and Vagarem the Thinker. The Destroyers are asleep somewhere in one of the Genetician depots, and nobody has any intention of waking them up. In particular, Arisheïm the Destroyer, Galeshor the Executor, and Nisheim the Redeemer, are three Destroyers whose names alone inspire intense fear.

As for the six Renegades, nothing is known about them, although it is thought that Demeter may be one of them.

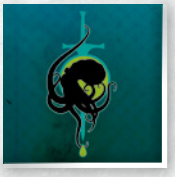
Some maintain that the Geneticians are awaiting what they call their "Renaissance." It is believed they were running genetic experiments in order to create copies of themselves in anticipation of their own rebirth.

THE BLACK SUN FELLOWSHIP

This organization is made up of dissident members of the Cult of the Trident. Their aim is to impose a dictatorship ruled by the rare individuals who are capable of controlling the Polaris Effect. They refute the idea that any mere mortal can learn to control such a great power (unofficially, many of the priests of the Trident share the same point of view). They resort to firm and efficient methods to achieve their aims. If humans behave like animals then they should be treated as such. Therefore, the priests of the Black Sun literally consider themselves as shepherds to their flocks.

The Fellowship has infiltrated almost every organization and is conspiring to one day seize power. It has established several secret bases under the oceans where it is gathering forces for the day of its accession. Thankfully, only a minority of its members are able to use the Polaris Effect. Their combat fighter vessels, in the shape of a trident, are well known for their fantastic maneuverability, and they prove that the Black Sun owns arms factories.

The organization is run by the Other, a mysterious character that nobody has ever seen and whose power is at least equal to that of Demeter. Its spokesman, Alemsh Palkrach, is a former counselor of Jason Helio. Many think that the only thing that truly separates these two organizations is quite simply their fight for power.



THE FELLOWS OF THE DEEP

The terrorist group that goes by the name of the Fellows of the Deep is a dangerous organization. Fortunately their means are limited. Its members are fanatics convinced that the Apocalypse is due to sweep the Earth. They think that they are the chosen ones who are destined to survive the judgment of the forces that rule the universe.

Founded by Ralaken Trillsak, a former Ruins Raider pirate, it is thought that this brotherhood is no more than a thousand strong. Ralaken is worshipped like a god ever since he discovered preserved engravings in the ruins of a sunken city that portrayed Judgment Day. His "Archangels," ten or so individuals in charge of recruiting new followers and organizing terrorist actions, serve him. As they do not have the resources of a group like the Black Sun, all the members of this organization are set up in various communities and cities, ready to use any possible occasion to create chaos. It is rumored that Ralaken lives in a secret installation, buried in the ruins of a Mediterranean city.

New recruits often come from the slums of large cities. They have to accomplish a number of trials to prove that they are worthy of the fellowship. These trials include committing heinous crimes. Once a new recruit has accomplished this task, he is marked with the sign of the fellowship, a black dagger tattooed on a hidden part of his body. The new members of this organization usually visit Ralaken's secret underwater lair at least once in their life to receive the supreme consecration. Some rumors claim that people in very high places are members of this fellowship.

The worldwide security forces are not particularly interested in finding the Fellows of the Deep as, to date, their actions have never had any serious consequences or have been stopped in time. However, any members who are discovered are shot on sight without any due process or trial.

Some say that Ralaken Trillsak is no longer "entirely" human but is now a puppet controlled by a creature of the deep.

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THE LEVIATHAN COMMUNITY

This strange community rules over the whole of the Aleutian Trench where the cartographers have measured abyssal trenches that reach depths of up to 18,000 meters. The Leviathan Community lives in this trench and maintains a strange relationship with the gigantic monsters that inhabit it—the leviathans. As this community refuses any contact with the rest of the world, very little about it is known. Occasionally, an emissary from the community travels to Equinox, but it is usually in the greatest secrecy for a meeting with Demeter. The only inhabitants of the trench who have been seen in public were dressed in heavy leather garb and their faces were hidden behind some sort of heavily decorated mask. Some say that this community has managed to tame the leviathans.

Recently, a fleet from the Polar Alliance that violated the community's territorial waters was completely wiped out by the leviathans. Astoundingly, the fleet was made up of a battleship, two cruisers, and six frigates.

THEMIS

This recently-formed faction is believed to be made up of very rich and powerful people who are determined to put an end to the revolting, degrading, and inhuman treatment to which fertile people are submitted, especially the women. It also actively works against the human trafficking trade. It is thought that this organization finances a number of public groups that fight for this cause, but that it also has a number of agents who are just as capable of getting fertile people to safety as they are of assassinating anyone caught practicing this revolting trade.

TELMA TILTANE AND THE HEGEMONIC REBELLION MOVEMENT

The rebellion in the Hegemony is run by Telma Tiltane. It is still a small organization that has very little in terms of resources. It is mainly made up of people who come from underprivileged areas, people excluded by society, or those who oppose the state's extreme policies on fertility. This last category can include people who occupy positions of power, but who secretly support the group. Telma's fight against the breeding centers, that she herself once escaped, has found a sympathetic ear among the population of the Hegemony.

MERCENARIES

Mercenary communities represent about a third of all the small underwater states. They are usually small organizations whose only goal is to sell their services for all kinds of missions. Some of the larger communities can run companies of mercenaries and still produce other commodities. The mercenaries are equipped with gear that is often patched up by the many technicians who excel in the art of tinkering.

Here are a few of the best known groups, renowned for their actions or for their members' personalities:

Legion: This is the largest group of mercenaries ever created. With more combat vessels and soldiers than the average state, Legion is a truly prosperous corporation of mercenaries whose reputation is well established. The Gorda Territory is home to 12,800 mercenaries and their families, where the three main bases of Legion have been installed. Cerberea, the capital of this organization, is also a platform for all the mercenaries of the world who are looking to negotiate their contracts or get started in the profession. Legion currently has contracts with the Hegemony, the Red League, and the Coral Republic. Its main activity is to fight against pirates. The leader of Legion is Admiral "One-Eye" Valerius, a 59-year-old former admiral of the Red League.

The Kiowas: These beginners are just getting started on Adelaide and, for the moment, they are behaving pretty well. After a few minor skirmishes, they have already established themselves as excellent underwater fighter pilots. One of their main characteristics is that they use Mantas, Sleepers, and small vehicles such as sea scooters.

The Gabriel Cohort: This company's base is situated in the Amirante Trench. The company specializes in underwater commandos. It only owns a small number of vessels, but can provide 800 commandos trained in boarding, sabotage, and very deep-water diving. Indeed, some of its members are Techno-Hybrids, Geno-Hybrids, or fluid-users.

The Mad Dogs: This brand new group is barely a hundred members strong. Their base of operations has been established right next to the Pirate Kingdoms, near the Java Trench. Using makeshift equipment, its members have accumulated so many victories in their various contracts that they have become the rising stars of the profession. They are very original mercenaries who paint their vessels with exuberant patterns and live only to fight. They have a reputation for being mentally unbalanced and those who have fought by their side in the past have admitted having difficulty adapting to the flowery language they scream into their communicators during combat. Their leader is a complete dimwit, a 34-year-old who goes by the pseudonym of Psycho.

The Wolves of the Deep: This group of mercenaries is specialized in underground and aboveground interventions. Its headquarters is situated on the Voring Plateau. Its members are former Ruins Raiders, converted to mercenary work. Their leader is a nearly two-meter-tall athlete named Morgan Felshner.

PIRATES AND RAIDERS

Pirates and raiders scour the seas to plunder the riches produced by the other communities. They remain one of the key problems of sixth-century society. They can be found anywhere,

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hidden away in the abyssal trenches or grouped into what they try to pass off as peaceful communities. But their favorite area is the region that is known as the Pirate Kingdoms. This region, covered in hundreds of raider communities, is tucked away in the "forest" of the Pacific mountains that spreads out between the New Zealand Plateau, the Tuamotu Islands, the Kuril Trench, and the Philippine Trench. Following an enemy ship into this area is a difficult mission. The layout of the area allows any ship to escape its pursuers since their scanners are rendered useless by the topography of the seabed. Those who might attempt to navigate nearer the surface to avoid this obstacle soon suffer the effects of the violent weather conditions that act as a kind of protective lid to the Pirate Kingdoms. Currents, flows, and whirlpools prove to be a real form of protection to the scoundrels. Here are a few of the most renowned pirates or groups of raiders:

The Ruins Raiders: Many raiders scour the ruins of the sunken cities of ancient times. Once they have set up their lairs in or near the ruins, they extract anything they can to be sold to the States or to Equinox. They are the only ones to exploit these forgotten cities. Nobody else would dare risk exploring these shallow areas, haunted by amphibian monsters and constantly ravaged by disturbances on the surface. Most of them live in horrendous conditions and are equipped with gear that is completely out of date.

Telkran Raljik, Pirate of the Deep: Telkran Raljik is the most famous of all the pirates. Proving to be completely elusive, he roams the oceans on his ship, the *Argonaut*. This impressive ship is the size of a heavy cruiser and is capable of navigating at depths that most vessels of its size are incapable of reaching. Reaping the benefits of the latest technological innovations in terms of weapons, and with numerous bases hidden away in the deepest abysses, the vessel has inflicted a number of painful defeats to the fleets of even the largest nations. The secret services of these nations would, for that matter, really like to get their hands on the *Argonaut* to study it. The *Argonaut* can transport 26 combat fighter vessels and 120 underwater commandos. It can also carry a special kind of 'infantry': dolphins equipped with exo-respirators and communication systems. Telkran is a brilliant commander, a master in the art of underwater-boarding and sabotage. His favored hunting grounds are the territories of the great nations.

The Unicorn Fellowship: This fellowship, created fairly recently, was founded by Killrave. The Unicorns first became known during the pillage of Kathai in 561. Fighting alongside Erik Left-hand and Six-toothed Andrack, they were quick to prove their skills and have since settled in the lead of the list of small up-and-coming fellowships. The greatest difficulty that this fellowship encounters is the state of wear and tear in its stations. Serious incidents, caused by the failure of key systems, have cost the lives of several men and women. Killrave detests those who engage in human trafficking and engages them whenever he gets a chance.

The Red Lions of the Carolinas: This nomadic population only travels on board the enormous cruisers of the Empire of the Geneticians. It is completely unknown how they came to be in possession of these vessels, nor the extent of their abilities. They plunder everything that happens to be in their way. Aragon Pimoud, the megalomaniac who calls himself "Emperor William," is the leader of this barbaric horde from another time. He is a man without any scruples, and one of the most vicious predators under the seas.

The Tubuai Assailants: The Assailants worship their mutant androgynous master. With his four arms, this despicable individual has usurped the name of a goddess from the ancient times, after discovering a statue of her in the sunken ruins of a city. Of course, he was quick to snap off two of the statue's arms. His Assailants are equipped with outdated gear, but they make up for their technological handicap with blind fanaticism.

The Predators: These pirates are true to their name. They will attack anything that moves, living only for battle and pillage. Their fleet is made up of vessels stolen from every nation in the world. Their forces are estimated at 300 combat cruisers spread out around the globe. However, most of them are stationed at the various bases they maintain in the Pirate Kingdoms. They cannot really be classified as raiders. For them, loot is just the winner's ransom. What they are most motivated by is the prospect of confronting enemy vessels. They have often spared opponents that they considered to have fought bravely. The leader of the Predators carries the title of Shaitan and his authority can, at any moment, be challenged by any member of the crew who must prove his valor in single combat.

The Dagger Fellowship: The fellowship was created recently and it is led by the youngest pirate captain in history. Captain Len is just 25 years old and he commanded his first vessel at the age of 15. He successfully united most of the pirate communities during a battle to the east of the Coral Republic. The details of what happened at that time are not well known, but what is certain is that young Len was able to forge his reputation as a great captain.

Seyar the Damned: This pirate is among the most wanted individuals, ever since some people reported that he had important information about genetic degeneration. He is said to be obsessed by the mission that he has sworn to carry out. His connections with Captain Len are rather ambiguous. It is said that the two men nourish a deep hatred of each other, but nobody really knows the reason why. Seyar has put together a colossal fortune that he uses to obtain information about the Azure Alliance, in order to maintain his fleet and groups of pirate mercenaries.

SMUGGLERS AND BOUNTY HUNTERS

Smugglers are very common under the seas. Their commerce is blooming and the nations' security forces are struggling to arrest them. They are rarely organized into groups and prefer

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to act alone. Their main activities are transporting forbidden goods from one state to another, transporting fugitives, delivering undeclared gear to companies keen to avoid taxes, and trafficking drugs or stolen goods.

Some smugglers are so talented at their job that a number of communities have put a price on their heads.

Bounty hunters are fierce individualists too, but they do sometimes come together in companies of various sizes. The most famous of all is Bloodhound, a company based on Equinox. Their activity is legal in all states as long as their contract is authorized by the authorities of Equinox.

Scavengers are small groups of individuals, often smugglers, who specialize in the disposal of wrecks. They spend their time looking for the remains of vessels so that they can scrounge any useful parts. Some groups are impressively well equipped and manage to get wind of when and where a battle will take place. All they have to do is turn up just after the battle with their building vessels. They are, in general, excellent technicians.

MAIN STATIONS AND UNDERWATER CITIES

ACHILLA

Population: 12,000	**Fertile population:** 17%
Depth: -3,100 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 8 complexes	**Government/ruler:** dictatorship/Zemo

The leader of this community is a true paranoiac who sees a potential pirate in every stranger. As a result, Achilla is a true police state; one that is very heavily armed. Zemo also suspects both New Lemuria and the Coral Republic of wanting to seize his installations. Half of his fleet is useless, as it lacks enough capable people to serve as crew. Zemo is the heir to one of the oceans' greatest fortunes, belonging to the founder of Raecor Enterprises.

ADELAIDE

Population: 2,300	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -810 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Larkater

A very modest, small community, Adelaide survives with great difficulty. It is a favored target for pirates passing through: small and easily portable industries, few defenses, etc. Recently, the community has hired the services of a start-up mercenary group, the Kiowas. The community's council hopes that, in the coming years, they will be able to establish a station on the Bellingshausen Abyssal Plain where certain rich veins have been detected.

ANGEL

Population: 1,800	**Fertile population:** 13%
Depth: -200 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 1 cliff-side city	**Government/ruler:** council/Helena

This community specializes in underground mining, exploration, maintenance of automated factories, and access tunnels toward the surface. It is a prosperous city. Its principal clients are the Hegemony and the Red League. The struggle against the Burrowers is one of its priorities.

ASTRID

Population: 868	**Fertile population:** 13%
Depth: -593 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Merolar

Like all remote communities, the living conditions on Astrid are extremely punishing. Resupplying is rare, work is exhausting, and contact with other stations is infrequent. Despite the enormous potential of lands near the poles, the working mines are underdeveloped. Raw materials, machinery, and workers are all lacking. The majority of people in this community have not left the stations for more than ten years. The spoken language is a distorted form of ancient Azuran. The officials in charge of selling merchandise possess some scraps of Neo-azuran and Solean. The community has been in a stand-off with Pelial for several years over the exploitation of a rich vein of tri-terranium.

CERBEREA

Population: 28,000	**Fertile population:** 16%
Depth: -1,100 m	**Mutant population:** 11%
Community type: 1 cliff-side city, 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** none/"One-Eye"

The majority of the equipment and troops here are in non-stop operation. Cerberea is the mother station to Legion, the famous mercenary group. It is also a rendezvous point for all the world's mercenaries to find contracts. The city welcomes several thousand visitors. The community has only been attacked once by a pirate group, who were confronted to their surprise by not only Legion troops but also those of several itinerant mercenary groups. The unlucky pirates were all killed or captured.

CHEKO

Population: 1,400	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -255 m	**Mutant population:** 4%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** board of director/Ryan Terd

A rival of Tsoi, this community is directed by the Vigilant corporation, which is ready to do anything to get rid of its

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inconvenient neighbor, even ally itself with pirates. Vigilant is, reportedly, currently investing in the region to develop an experimental station on the surface. If this is the case, a major offensive against Tsoi is to be expected.

CLINTOK	
Population: 900	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -200 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Rellan Deric

A small, peaceful community, Clintok survives off its livestock and crops. This is an average community that has never faced any major problems.

COIBA	
Population: 2,600	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -350 m	**Mutant population:** 4%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** administrative council/Leo Paral

Largely subsidized by the Hegemonian corporation Neotech, this community is destined in the near future to be absorbed by the Hegemonian Empire. For the moment, it serves as a buffer between the kingdom of the Patriarchs and that of the Red League.

CRESCIA	
Population: 200	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -10,261 and -19,500 m	**Mutant population:** 40%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Elma Derling

This community of archaeologists and scientists established one of the deepest stations in existence. It is financed by the Coral Republic and the Watchers. Its inhabitants conduct their research about the greatest depths and explore caverns that house traces of past civilizations. Because of the depth, it is rare for Crescia to be troubled by pirates. For the past several months, the station's budget has been expanded. Moreover, commandos, Hybrids, and deep-sea intervention commandos have been posted to the station.

CROSS	
Population: 1,145	**Fertile population:** 19%
Depth: -200 to -435 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** religious council/Milus the Visionary

The first complex of Cross was built in the ruins of a monastery vessel of the Cult of the Trident that wrecked in the area. A man named Milus Trend established a society there that is entirely dedicated to the adoration of a single god and the annihilation of heretics. Numerous encounters with the Cult of the Trident have permitted Trend to become a bit more sociable. He now accepts Polaris Effect specialists. His community has grown, and today houses the main combat training center for priests of the Cult of the Trident. However, Milus Trend has not agreed to make peace with the communities of Hell and Litua, which he believes to be haunted by demons. Demeter has not insisted that he renounce his crusade since it is highly likely that these two communities are dens of the Black Sun Fellowship.

CROZET	
Population: 1,400	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -410 m	**Mutant population:** 17%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Leia Lamark

Crozet is a small community whose two stations are stuck in the Crozet Islands Fault. It works several Cylast mines at a depth of 4,600 meters. It is allied with the community of Oster to fight off pirates more efficiently.

CUNHA	
Population: 2,600	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -900 m	**Mutant population:** 14%
Community type: 4 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Yvan Pelis

Cunha makes the most of the riches found on the Tristan da Cunha Islands. The community suffers from the same problems of piracy as the Cape Federation. Certain rumors have suggested that this community might be a Black Sun base.

DEM	
Population: 850	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -760 m	**Mutant population:** 43%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Grisvald

Dem is similar to Frao. The head of this community is a mutant with a hideously deformed face. He wears a mask at all times.

DJOUR	
Population: 2,100	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -215 m	**Mutant population:** 19%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Laer Trenp

A small, classic, deep-sea community, Djour does not face major problems in ensuring its survival. People live there in

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cramped circumstances, but morale is good and revenue is growing. The only community Djour has frequent relations with is Cheko. This is because the Okhotsk Sea, which separates Djour from the community of Laipur, is one of the most dangerous in the world due to violent currents. It is also said that there is a graveyard of ships in the region.

ESIO

Population: 1,200	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -225 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Ameiya

Esio has long abandoned any hope of being spared by the pirates. Today it's a subdued community that just lets pirates passing through pillage its stocks. The example of a neighboring community, Extur, which was entirely wiped out by pirates, served as a lesson to a great number of small mining communities in the region.

FERLO

Population: 17,000	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -200 m	**Mutant population:** 11%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Klyss

This is a peaceful community dedicated solely to hydroculture and livestock farming. More than 6,000 dolphins come together regularly in this region. They get along very well with the population and are even venerated as divinities by some people. Time and time again, the dolphins have helped Ferlo at critical moments, notably against monsters and pirates.

FERRA

Population: 0	**Fertile population:** 0
Depth: -903 m	**Mutant population:** 0
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** none

The entire population (900 individuals) of this station disappeared mysteriously a few months ago. A new investigating committee will be dispatched to the location by the Watchers in the weeks to come. No one knows what happened.

FRAO

Population: 1,200	**Fertile population:** 15%
Depth: -215 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 8 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Olaf Debeurre

Frao is a merchant community that welcomes convoys from the east. In addition to its mining operations, Frao offers lodging, as well as several leisure activities, to the crews of ships passing through. To combat pirates, the community has allied itself with Dem and Olysia. This alliance might lead to the formation of a new state.

GABRIEL COHORT

Population: 3,800	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -6,000 m	**Mutant population:** 1%
Community type: underground complex	**Government/ruler:** military hierarchy/Ameross

Hidden in the deepest fault of the Amirante Trench, the base that houses the 800 commandos of the Cohort, as well as their families and support teams, is completely undetectable. In fact, all the station's structures are underground. The Cohort rents its services to all of the world's nations. Their rates are high but the services they render are always impeccable. It is said that the community employs several secret bases and has uncovered a few Genetician depots.

GATEO

Population: 200	**Fertile population:** 0%
Depth: -4,100 m	**Mutant population:** 0%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** fellowship/Kroll

This strange community of monks has completely shut itself off. No one has ever gotten permission to visit their curious complex. The structure, in perfect condition, is protected by a defensive Genetician field of incredible strength. The community lives off a few farms. However, it is not known how its members manage to maintain the station. It is whispered that Kroll, the master of the premises, might be a renegade Trident priest. According to certain observations, the community discovered a very deep undersea cavern, which is the home to a cult dedicated to a most unusual creature. It is impossible to determine if Gateo is responsible for the strange phenomena detected around the community of Suvadi.

GAZA

Population: 2,100	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -460 m	**Mutant population:** 11%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council

Gaza is a small community of miners whose excavations are situated in the Mozambique Channel. The community suffers from piracy and recently decided to rent the services of mercenaries. A team of miners discovered a narrow fault of indeterminate depth in the channel. The remains of several facilities in the sector suggest that there once stood here, many centuries ago, an Azure Alliance city, a Genetician base, or perhaps some other civilization. Archaeologists reportedly are on their way to study the site.

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GEORGIA

Population: 4,500	**Fertile population:** 8%
Depth: -615 m	**Mutant population:** 46%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** none

The S.M.S.O. refused to validate the concessions of this community made up of old pirates and mercenaries. Georgia uses several hydroculture fields to ensure its subsistence. Otherwise, it focuses on mercenary work. Recently, several delegates from the Cult of the Trident have come to Georgia to study the strange link that ties the inhabitants to tiger sharks. The Cult has also proposed to the community that they will be given credit if they agree to share their livestock farming techniques with the priests. This proposition ran up against the refusal of the community's war leader Kyl Graven, a notorious psychopath who thinks only of destroying Orca. However, revolt is brewing among his men. Georgia is allied with Varevris, for whom it furnishes fighters in the battle against Orca in exchange for equipment and food. Kyl Graven is particularly interested in the fertile population of Orca. He has already succeeded at capturing a full 30 of their breeder men and women, whom he guards jealously. The infertile prisoners are reduced to slavery.

HELENE

Population: 17,000	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -3,200 m	**Mutant population:** 17%
Community type: 19 complexes, 2 cliff-side cities	**Government/ruler:** empress/Telenea

One of the cities that participates in the "War of Three Cities," Helene owes its power to the discovery of an important Genetician depot, to which it kept its exploitation rights. Therefore, it makes use, along with its conventional armaments, of numerous exotic weapons from that depot, notably its famous Genetician flagship cruiser, the *Liberius*, an *Apocalypse*-class vessel. The empress Telenea, who reigns over this nation and is truly venerated, claims the entire Great Oceanic Rift. Naturally, the S.M.S.O. has never approved such a claim. In fact, the organization is only waiting for an incident involving Watcher vessels or those from another regional community to justify military intervention in this conflict. (See also Tyr and Luan.)

HELL

Population: 18,000	**Fertile population:** 14%
Depth: -350 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: 13 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Gunter

A very aggressive and expansionist community, Hell is wealthy. In a few years, it has doubled its number of installations and is not planning to stop there. In addition to its farming and livestock, it has formed a surface exploration team that is in high demand by the large nations. One finds enormous statues of the god Odin in all of the community's complexes. Orcas, which are numerous in this region, are equally venerated by the inhabitants of Hell. It is also said that certain orcas allow the most valorous inhabitants to ride them.

HORN

Population: 4,700	**Fertile population:** 19%
Depth: -1,159 m	**Mutant population:** 15%
Community type: 1 cliff-side city, 4 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Leipver Tren

In the past, this community belonged to the Red League. After the war with the Hegemony, it won its independence while retaining a strong connection to the League. Horn's population undoubtedly enjoys more space than people in other communities. The citizens work several mines situated at -3,800 meters and maintain a platform in the Shackleton Fracture Zone that extracts magma energy. The four complexes are located at -3,000 meters, as are the hydroculture fields. The Red League uses this base to control the passage of fleets at Cape Horn.

KALIMA

Population: 2,200	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -225 m	**Mutant population:** 27%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Kali

This community belongs unofficially to the androgynous mutant Kali. It is a neutral zone for all pirates who respect the code. The community's council trades with many small stations but has not succeeded in convincing the Coral Republic of its honesty. However, the Republic cannot act against Kalima, which is recognized by the S.M.S.O.

KATAL

Population: 29,200	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -200 m	**Mutant population:** 24%
Community type: 17 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Oloch Berua

The installations of this colony dominate the Argentine Abyssal Plain. They are all built on the summit of the continental slope. Regularly robbed by pirates, this peaceful community of livestock and hydroculture farmers has decided to purchase the services of the Legion to put an end to these attacks. Katal is comprised of several complexes, fairly close together, surrounded by hydroculture and farming fields that stretch for kilometers. The community currently seeks to extend its activities in the Parana Sea but it clashes with veritable armies of aquatic creatures, notably piranhas, mermaids, and sharks of all kinds. Legion has also been hired to "clean up" the region.

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KELL

Population: 1,800	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -213 m	**Mutant population:** 24%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Larxin

This small community mines several veins of Cylast and tri-terranium on the Canada Abyssal Plain. It is situated right in the middle of the principal commercial route between the Hegemony and the Polar Alliance, a circumstance that has often proved helpful.

LAIPUR

Population: 900	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -535 m	**Mutant population:** 17%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Dran Kresh

Laipur is the only installation to have contact with the community of Leviathan, whose representatives have set themselves up in the Kuril Trench. As a result, it has never been subjected to the assaults of pirates. Laipur runs some mines situated on the trench, down to a depth of 15,000 meters. Lesarachian is the strange language of the Leviathan community.

LAMARCH

Population: 750	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -252 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Regnar Trav

Regnar Trav is an old pirate who has moved into mining exploration. His community is traditional. He is suspected of resorting to smuggling since he finds the life of a miner exhausting and unprofitable. The station's council is only symbolic. Regnar is the only one who decides things.

LARGAN

Population: 2,976	**Fertile population:** 42%
Depth: -475 m	**Mutant population:** 98%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Palia

This community was founded by Palia, a genetics research company from the Coral Republic, who made it as a shelter for mutants. It is a peaceful community, financed by the Coral Republic's research laboratories. There they seek to understand genetic degeneration and bring a measure of comfort to the most deformed mutants.

LEICAL

Population: 7,000	**Fertile population:** 20%
Depth: -350 m	**Mutant population:** 15%
Community type: 2 complexes, 1 cliff-side installation	**Government/ruler:** administrative council

Leical is a community that prospered after having discovered several interesting mineral deposits. Sustained by the Hegemony, it rapidly learned how to make a profit from its resources. The great majority of the population supports the Hegemonian regime that has brought them such prosperity. Sadly, Leical was very soon forced to confront the Burrowers during the creation of its capital, a cliff-side city. They suffered numerous skirmishes with these creatures. But thanks to weapons for underground combat lent to them by the Hegemony (namely, drilling ships) and troops of mercenaries who specialize in this type of fighting, the situation is bearable. However, the council feels that it should transfer its headquarters elsewhere.

LENG

Population: unknown	**Fertile population:** unknown
Depth: unknown	**Mutant population:** unknown
Community type: unknown	**Government/ruler:** unknown

The mysterious phantom community of Leng is an enigma. Some people swear to have seen it, or even to have been welcomed by strange individuals who worship bizarre beings and use an unknown technology. Several testimonies even describe a station situated on the surface, at the foot of a mountain. Its inhabitants are said to go on pilgrimages outside without diving suits. In fact, nothing is known for certain about this community. Yet hundreds of witnesses affirm that there is something special in this region, and this fact is confirmed by several captains of military ships from the Hegemony and the Polar Alliance, as well as by carefully guarded statements from inhabitants of Tundra. The secret services from all the nations are particularly interested in Leng, whose population might have discovered a system of extremely powerful sonar camouflage.

LEYFA

Population: 1,960	**Fertile population:** 15%
Depth: -450 m to -700 m	**Mutant population:** 18%
Community type: 6 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Pyrus

A small community, Leyfa exclusively pursued hydroculture and livestock farming until an exploratory team discovered a rich vein of Cylast in the Biscay Abyssal Plain. Since then, it has hired the services of many independent miners and is

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considering its development. It furnishes a large part of the food production for Cross.

LITUA	
Population: 1,500	**Fertile population:** 38%
Depth: -435 m	**Mutant population:** 48%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Polyaden

Litua, following the example of Hell, uses specialized services in the exploration of ruins on the surface. These groups are in great demand by the large nations. The Cult of Odin was born from these explorations. It is a religion based on the adoration of strange statues and engravings, brought back from the surface, showing a bearded giant. Orcas, which are very numerous in the region, are also venerated. They live in peace with the communities of Hell and Litua.

LLEND	
Population: 700	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -600 m to -7,800 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: fluctuating station	**Government/ruler:** none/ Kali

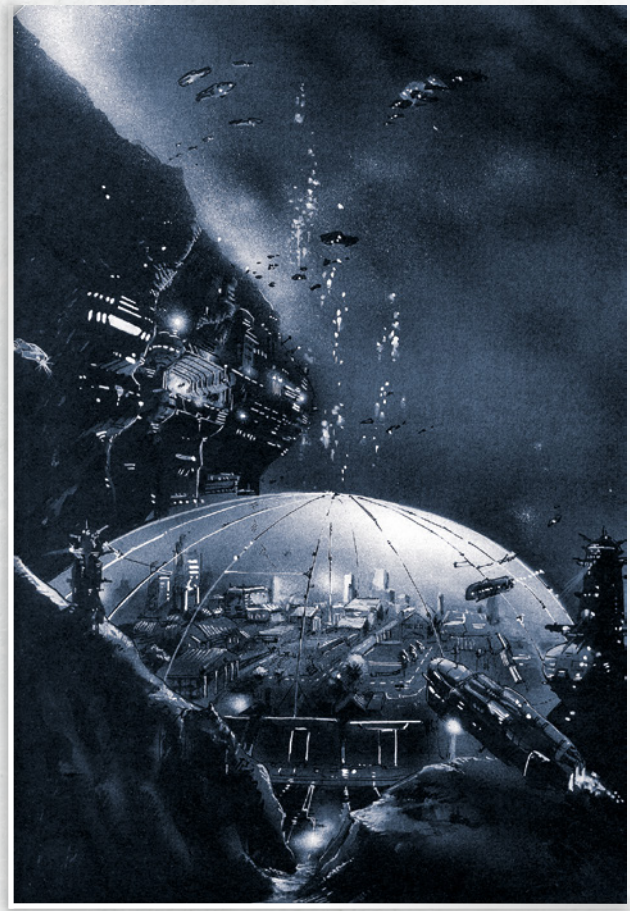
This small fluctuating station is commanded by an enigmatic person who is suspected to be the infamous pirate Kali. It was built above a trench that goes 10,000 meters down and it fluctuates continually. It cannot surpass a depth of 7,800 meters. The station produces nothing. In fact, this is a leisure station frequented by pirates as well as merchants, Coralian soldiers, and Watchers on leave.

LUAN	
Population: 26,000	**Fertile population:** 34%
Depth: -230 m/-5,600 m	**Mutant population:** 12%
Community type: 68 complexes, 1 cliff-side city	**Government/ruler:** council

The second community participating in the famous "War of Three Cities," Luan works the Angola Abyssal Plain on a massive scale. Luan was, at its inception, created by Kilian Industries but it won its independence several years ago. However, it is suspected that Luan has been supported by Kilian during the conflict. The council of this nation is certainly the most disposed to stop this war.

MAD DOGS	
Population: 120	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -8,800 m	**Mutant population:** 50%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** none/ Psycho

The home base of the Mad Dogs is so small and poorly maintained that most of the pilots sleep in their vessels,



which are infinitely more comfortable than most of the sleeping cabins in undersea housing. Each member of this community has their own religion, which is generally based on the ancient cults. These are very cultured people and the majority of them read long-forgotten languages, since they have a history of looting archaeological ruins. The pilots' families, when they have them, live on this base, spending their time preventing the structure's collapse. An old, ruined cruiser lies beside the station. Its weaponry is intact and it serves as a defensive system.

MAIO	
Population: 26,000	**Fertile population:** 17%
Depth: -100 m to -4,000 m	**Mutant population:** 28%
Community type: 12 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Cleo

Maio is an extremely isolationist community that only rarely authorizes visits to its territory. The small complexes are built on the rocky ledges that surround what used to be the Cape Verde Islands. There, they exploit rich veins of diamonds. The council is totally paranoid and scrutinizes any member of the community who may be a potential spy. The inhabitants of Maio worship an entity known by the name of

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Cristal, who was reportedly buried at the very bottom of one of their mines. The community's troops regularly deal with attacks from the Burrowers.

MALIA

Population: 0	**Fertile population:** N/A
Depth: -200 m	**Mutant population:** N/A
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** N/A

This community, once prosperous from exploiting some particularly rich mines, has been entirely wiped out by the discovery of a Genetician virus. Moloch 27 was stored in a depot, which has never been explored. Over several days, the entire population was contaminated. The region is quarantined and guarded by Watcher cruisers. These cruisers have destroyed any ship attempting to leave the complexes. To this day, 20 years after the drama, any machine that penetrates the quarantine zone is annihilated. Certain rumors mention strange radio transmissions emanating from one of the complexes.

MANAG

Population: 12,000	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -350 m	**Mutant population:** 16%
Community type: 12 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Rajar Terano

A small, quiet community, these days Manag hosts an embassy from the Red League as well as a Hegemonian embassy; it serves as a buffer zone between the two states. However, it has been amply compensated for this service. It is also an important commercial platform for trade between the two nations. The community welcomes thousands of visitors.

MAUL

Population: 10,000	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -350 and -210 m	**Mutant population:** 1%
Community type: 6 complexes, 2 cliff-side cities	**Government/ruler:** managed by the Polar Tri-Pole Corporation

On the brink of ruin, this community was put under the supervision of the Polar Alliance. Entrusted to the good care of Tri-Pole, it has truly become an advanced base for the Alliance, in constant struggle with the community of Udson for the exploitation of the the Hudson Bay region's riches. Since Udson is controlled by a Hegemonian corporation, this is in fact a mini-conflict between the two states in this region. The mutants are little tolerated on Maul and the population is subject to the regime of the Primarch Alexander. Some affirm that incredible riches lie in the depths of the bay. The Burrowers bring ferocious guerilla warfare against the community's cliff-side cities.

MERROX

Population: 800	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -435 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Leminsk

This completely new community is devoted entirely to hydroculture and livestock farming. Its founder, Thadeus Leminsk, is a brilliant researcher. He is attempting to develop new farming techniques in his community. This greatly interests the Cult of the Trident, which funds the majority of Merrox's expenses. This station has recently been classified a sensitive zone by the S.M.S.O., under pressure from the Cult of the Trident. It is said that the Cult has decided to annex the station.

METCHV

Population: 600	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -230 m	**Mutant population:** 1%
Community type: 1 domed complex	**Government/ruler:** administrative council/ Elvond

This community is entirely financed by the Mediterranean company, Hermes. It is a laboratory researching living conditions on the surface. The company tests all its models of machinery destined for missions on the surface here.

MEYA

Population: 17,000	**Fertile population:** 16%
Depth: -3,970 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 4 complexes	**Government/ruler:** administrative council

This small community has existed for dozens of years. It is the headquarters of the well known company Hammerdale, which specializes in anti-shock systems. It is said that one of the stations of this community was built on top of a small Genetician depot. Around the complexes are assembled underwater factories that reach as far as the eye can see. The community is completely energy-independent, thanks to two geothermal stations. It does not employ a single soldier and must therefore retain the services of mercenaries to defend itself. Generally, this protection is provided for them by their clients.

NECRA

Population: 1,700	**Fertile population:** 17%
Depth: -6,100 m	**Mutant population:** 21%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Nerami

The region is riddled with small abyssal trenches that can reach to depths of 20,000 meters. Necra has become quite famous thanks to the discovery of a new mineral, xenium, which the community mines at depths of 18,000 meters. They claim to owe this discovery to a mysterious people who live

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in the deepest waters below 20,000 meters. Skeptics think the miners were hallucinating and suggest they should check their diving fluids.

NEODES

Population: 1,600	**Fertile population:** 16%
Depth: -2,400 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Reyk Derton

This small, relatively new community specializes in the exploitation of magma on the Galapagos Rise and Fracture Zone. It is confronted by constant attacks from the sea monsters that abound in the region. Recently, it hired the services of a small Legion group to "clean up" the area.

NERA

Population: 150	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -254 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Liendsik Galeo

Nera is a completely new and isolated community that mines a small vein of Cylast. It does not have any distinguishing characteristics. The region where it is situated seems relatively quiet.

NERAMI

Population: 4,800	**Fertile population:** 19%
Depth: -450 m	**Mutant population:** 9%
Community type: 8 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Patrick Demsey

A small, prosperous community that's been independent for four years, Nerami is constantly complaining to the S.M.S.O. about multiple violations of its territory by Hegemonian fleets. The community exploits several mines in the Mid-Ocean Canyon (-4,500 meters), which is a commercial route frequently used by Hegemonian transports. In recent months, the station has received substantial financial aid, the source of which remains mysterious. This influx of money has permitted the station to reinforce its mercenary contingent and to consider expanding its number of working mines.

NOBRA

Population: 200	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -227 m	**Mutant population:** 17%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Lemund

This community of livestock farmers and aquafarmers is new. It is supported by the Polar Alliance. Recently, it has been regularly attacked by small pirate groups. A Polar fleet is reportedly on the way to defend the settlement and wipe out the intruders.

NOVA

Population: 980	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -610 m	**Mutant population:** 9%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Loptar

Nova is a recently built community that is supported by the Kingdom of the Indus. In addition to its farming and livestock operations, it is proposing that it studies the living conditions on the surface from a small observation station built on Madagascar. The station is linked by a well to the underwater complex. It has been entirely financed by the Cult of the Trident. The community suffers little from pirate activity for the moment.

OLYSIA

Population: 1,400	**Fertile population:** 39%
Depth: -1,890 m	**Mutant population:** 28%
Community type: cliff-side city	**Government/ruler:** matriarchy/Elya Tyrell

Olysia is a community that is similar to Frao and Dem. Moreover, it provides a popular and profitable service of "female companions." Certain rumors suggest that the station is a bastion of the Black Sun. The majority of Olysia's population is female.

ONAKU

Population: 8,000	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -11,000 m	**Mutant population:** 0%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Isaru

Situated right on the border of the pirate kingdoms, Onaku is an advanced base for Piang. It is more a fortress than a community exploiting resources.

ONIGER

Population: 1,350	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -215 m	**Mutant population:** 17%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Nathan Dalle

Oniger is a small, peaceable community that trades with the Mediterranean Union. Its population is comprised of simple folk who survive without much difficulty. It is likely that, in the near future, this community will join the Union.

ORCA

Population: 12,000	**Fertile population:** 19%
Depth: -325 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: 6 complexes	**Government/ruler:** elected president and parliament/Katya Lagrun

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This small, promising community has seen its growth interrupted for years by conflict with Varevris and Georgia. It would have been swept up long since if, by the purest random chance, a group of divers had not saved the life of the leader of a pod of orcas who was attacked by a plated shark. The orcas thus entered into an alliance with the community. Orca operates several mines in the Weddel Abyssal Plains. Four complexes are at a depth of 325 meters, while the other two are situated at -4,000 meters.

OSTER

Population: 2,200	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -310 m	**Mutant population:** 17%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Lien Wellow

Oster was a prosperous community before pirates started raiding it. Weary of being robbed, it invested in defensive weapons and notably bought a *Kraken*-class cruiser from scavengers. It also contracted the services of several mercenaries. The community's council has absolutely no intention of rolling over. Moreover, it has entered into an alliance with Crozet to establish a mutual defense program.

UNDERWATER CITY

PELIAL

Population: 900	**Fertile population:** 17%
Depth: -593 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Nale Borsky

A twin city of Astrid, this community lives under similarly difficult conditions. Even though it has a number of contacts with other nations, notably with the Enderby Confederation, life there is particularly punishing. Pelial is in a cold war against Astrid, which is officially over the exploitation of a mine, but in reality, Pelial blames Astrid for having driven out a pod of orcas. Orcas are worshipped by the population of Pelial. There is no problem with piracy in this region. That said, certain unidentifiable ships have allegedly been detected many times by the community's soundscans. It would not be surprising if pirates, corsairs, and other assorted groups have hidden bases in this sector.

PIANG

Population: 3,800	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -215 m	**Mutant population:** 0%
Community type: 4 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Maloge

The community of Piang is one of the richest in the region. It is in a permanent state of war against certain pirate fellowships, but some suspect Piang of being, in fact, a legal front for other fellowships. Onaku is directly managed by the council of Piang. You will never see a single mutant in this city. Some say that they have all been exiled to the surface. Several Hegemonian agents have had contact with the council of Piang for unknown reasons.

PULL

Population: 9,800	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -1,800 m	**Mutant population:** 2%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** matriarchy/Malacha

This community has lived without any contact with the outside for more than a century. It was recently discovered by an exploratory group from Talkris. The society is entirely dominated by fertile women. Malacha, a 98-year-old woman, reigns absolutely over her people. Before re-contact, she was convinced that nothing remained of the human race. Contacts were immediately established with Talkris and the Mediterranean Union. The Union has furthermore taken charge of the base's renovation, which was in danger of collapse. The enormous air recycling system was functional despite the years but its output, reduced by poor upkeep, has accustomed Pull's population to living with little oxygen. The inhabitants of this community worship a particularly cruel goddess, Palya, whom certain archeologists have identified as being a Genetician. Her remains are allegedly concealed in a hidden depot in the region. Lexzion is a close linguistic relative to Arkonian. Not surprisingly, all these circumstances are of particular interest to Pull's new allies.

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REYK

Population: 1,400	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -2,683 m	**Mutant population:** 6%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Vincent King

A small community that has recently obtained its independence, Reyk primarily exploits magma energy resources through the use of two mobile stations on the Gibbs Fracture Zone. It suffers from heavy pirate activity in the region. Nevertheless, through its proximity to the neutral city, the Watchers frequently ensure its protection. Reyk's inhabitants have very little living space. They often visit Equinox to relax a bit.

ROGUE

Population: 31,000	**Fertile population:** 19%
Depth: -370 m	**Mutant population:** 12%
Community type: 6 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Sonia Telcris

Rogue is the rival community of Fuego Liberdad. The council at its head leads a policy of extremely aggressive expansion and contests the mining rights accorded to Fuego in the North Brazilian Ridge. The two regions' militias come into frequent conflict in this sector, attempting to kill as many of each other as possible. Rogue mainly exploits the riches of the Pernambouc Abyssal Plain. Reportedly, the council has recently invested in some surface equipment for an unknown purpose.

SAO

Population: 23,000	**Fertile population:** 18%
Depth: -360 m	**Mutant population:** 12%
Community type: 1 cliff-side city, 4 complexes, 12 minor stations	**Government/ruler:** principality/Prince Daverick

This prosperous community, which some people suspect of being a haven for pirates, is set to become a sovereign nation in 567. It has excellent relations with the majority of the great powers. Prince Daverick is renowned for his wisdom and learning. He frequently attends the receptions given by the elite of other countries. It is said that he is very popular among the Hegemonians. He is immensely rich and is believed to have even commissioned the construction of a dome on the surface, on the rocky islet that was once Columbia Peak. The cliff-side city is built on the flank of the Trinidad Range. The other installations are dispersed all around, at an average depth of 900 meters.

SONCHAC

Population: 600	**Fertile population:** 30%
Depth: -225 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Trentor

Sonchac is a small, average community that, strangely, has never suffered from pirate attacks. The region swarms with torpedo fish, which might explain its tranquility. It is quite simply impossible to get close to this station, if one does not know the region, without going through a sieve. The complex's inhabitants are among the calmest on the planet.

SUVADI

Population: 1,600	**Fertile population:** 19%
Depth: -3,800 m	**Mutant population:** 23%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** lordship/Count Peterson

Supported by the Kingdom of the Indus, this community is relatively new. It is led by a cousin of Duke Pilar de Rochas, who is absolutely incompetent at the management of his business. Moreover, for the last few months, the community has experienced some strange phenomena: violent, energy-charged currents that appear and disappear, silhouettes of monstrous creatures seen in the mines, unidentifiable sonar echoes, bizarre nightmares, etc. Count Peterson immediately blamed the community of Gateo, although it is more than 400 km away.

TALKRYSS

Population: 8,700	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -355 m	**Mutant population:** 5%
Community type: 2 complexes, 1 building vessel	**Government/ruler:** council/Lemuin Pisner

The majority of the inhabitants of this station are old mercenaries, scavengers, pirates, or ruins raiders. They came together to create their own community and to offer their services to neighboring nations. They make use of several hydroculture fields to meet their needs. Talkryss is a useful mine of information. For a good price, its inhabitants can furnish you with the latest rumors from the sea floor.

TELLUS

Population: 780	**Fertile population:** 34%
Depth: -1,740 m	**Mutant population:** 19%
Community type: 2 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Rellaian

This conventional community had succeeded at developing intensive undersea farming. It prospered until it suddenly stopped communicating with the rest of the world. The Watchers are said to be on their way to find out what happened on Tellus. According to certain rumors, these investigators have already arrived but have themselves disappeared.

TUNDRA

Population: 700	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -212 m	**Mutant population:** 47%
Community type: 8 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Ourso

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A peaceful community of livestock breeders and farmers, Tundra is threatened by strange amphibious creatures that ravage their domain. No one knows anything about these monsters that the inhabitants call the "colossi." A recent report from the Watchers also put forward the fact that Tundra regularly supplies food to the mysterious colony of Leng, about which they know nothing. The inhabitants of Tundra have refused to say how and where they send the requested food. The report also specifies that the people of this community are minimally advanced and suffer from inbreeding.

TRASS

Population: 600	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -280 m	**Mutant population:** 25%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Government/ruler:** council/Yan Kalver

This peaceful community is suspected by the Hegemonian government of harboring rebels. Despite numerous attempts at intimidation by the Patriarchs' armed forces, the community continues to deny this. It recently demanded that it be placed under the protection of the Watchers.

TROLL

Population: 2,600	**Fertile population:** 12%
Depth: -5 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Erald

Troll is a community established in one of the rare Genetician complexes discovered on the surface. Its structure is unchangeable. The community lives permanently in the enormous base, where it cultivates terrestrial plants that have otherwise disappeared. The pirates who have tried to attack Troll in diving armor have quickly given up. The station is reportedly equipped with some fairly effective defenses. The plants they cultivate sell for a fortune.

TSOI

Population: 2,600	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -255 m	**Mutant population:** 28%
Community type: 3 complexes	**Gov./ruler:** administrative council/Leop Sider

Sponsored by New Dynamic Enterprises, this community is in conflict with Cheko over the exploitation of several mines north of the ancient Kamchatka Peninsula. The community is developing numerous installations on the Bering Abyssal Plain. It may become, in the near future, a major force in the region.

TYR

Population: 10,280	**Fertile population:** 23%
Depth: -5,000 m	**Mutant population:** 45%
Community type: 23 complexes, 1 cliff-side city	**Government/ruler:** Warlord

Tyr is the final city that has taken part for decades in what is called the "War of Three Cities." A ferocious hatred divides the inhabitants of Tyr, Helene, and Luan. No mediator has succeeded at stopping this conflict, the causes of which are entirely unknown. This war is all the more detrimental because these three communities certainly exploit one of the richest regions of the planet. The battles among the different protagonists are so violent that the pirates never travel through the sector. The S.M.S.O. has submitted a plan of "forced pacification of the region." The master of Tyr gave himself the title of Warlord and elevated the art of combat to a veritable religion. He developed a major program of genetic research to trigger mutations in the population in order to create more effective soldiers. Unofficially, Tyr pays a number of pirates to obtain slaves and fertile individuals.

UDSON

Population: 7,100	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -300 m	**Mutant population:** 16%
Community type: 8 complexes, 1 cliff-side city	**Government/ruler:** leadership provided by the Hegemonian corporation Ogar

In 560, in response to the reacquisition of Maul by the Polar Alliance, the Hegemony decided to finance the installation of a mining base in Hudson Bay. Since then, Udson has conducted a latent war against its neighbor, Maul, for the exploitation of the riches of this zone. The main difficulty that this community encounters, entirely devoted as it is to the cause of the Patriarchs, is its provisioning. Effectively, the most ferocious battles take place in the northeast of the bay, the sole commercial route to the Hegemony. To resolve this problem, several years' work began to dig a tunnel in the south of the bay (to reconnect the ancient American Great Lakes) and thus link to the Hegemonian territory. Udson is also in charge of the surveillance of several surface factories located in this sector.

VALADES

Population: 7,200	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -98 m	**Mutant population:** 28%
Community type: domed complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Meleor Clavius

Valades is an experimental station created by scientists to study outside conditions. While it is officially independent, the installation is primarily financed by the Cult of the Trident. The buildings of the complex are covered by a protective dome that shields them from the disturbances on the surface. The inhabitants are confronted by two major problems: predators who regularly attack the station and several groups of looters who seem particularly interested by what they might find in the region. Until now, the contingent of Watchers has proven equal to the task. The researchers' work often requires them to go out "on the ground," which can

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turn out to be dangerous. But they are helped by ultramodern equipment and the employment of satellite weapons.

VALEAR

Population: 800	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -209 m	**Mutant population:** 37%
Community type: 1 domed complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Illya Frensk

Lost in the middle of the Great Plain of the Kara Sea, Valear is one of the only communities that survives in this deserted region. The ocean floor there is flat for thousands of square kilometers. Fauna and flora are scarce. The station only has occasional contact with Watchers ships, Polar Alliance resupply ships, and the community of Metchv. Even the pirates never set foot here.

VARACHA

Population: 600	**Fertile population:** 15%
Depth: -318 m	**Mutant population:** 35%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** Administrative council/ Philippe Pavot

The small community has been exploiting some mines in Baffin Bay for several years. It only has contacts with the Polar Alliance and the community of Leical. It's a terribly isolated station that, not being officially recognized by the S.M.S.O., is never visited by the Watchers. Its population travels to Equinox very rarely and contents themselves with tinkering to survive. Thanks to its alliance with Leical, the community can, from time to time, obtain spare equipment and, most importantly, food. The population is particularly welcoming toward foreigners despite the lack of space they endure.

VAREVRIS

Population: 6,700	**Fertile population:** 56%
Depth: -4,800 m	**Mutant population:** 0%
Community type: 6 complexes	**Government/ruler:** dictatorship/Eliand Kendall

The region, in the vicinity of the South Sandwich Trench, is marked by abysses that can attain depths of more than 16,000 meters. These are generally small trenches haunted by monstrous creatures. According to a report from a Watcher spy, strange things are happening in Varevris. The community may have established contact with a very ancient submarine race with astonishing equipment at its disposal. Whispers suggest that the master of Varevris, Eliand Kendall, might be a member of the Black Sun. These days, it is known that this community, for unknown reasons, wants to get rid of Orca at any cost.

WOLVES OF THE DEEP

Population: 6,500	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -3,200 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: 5 complexes	**Government/ruler:** none/ Morgan Felshner

This community of mercenaries was created by Morgan Felshner, a legendary fighter pilot. He gathered around himself numerous ruins raiders, including the famous Klos Trell who discovered six Genetician depots all by himself. Morgan rents his services to anyone, but he clearly prefers small communities. It is believed that the organization uses several bases scattered across the different oceans. It is equally likely that they use undeclared Genetician depots. The Wolves are endowed with equipment that is extremely well-maintained, something that cannot be said about their complexes. Some suspect Morgan Felshner of having resorted to piracy to supplement his income.

XAL

Population: 2,000	**Fertile population:** 65%
Depth: 0 m	**Mutant population:** 98%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Decraar

This astonishing community, built in a cavern, is partially submerged. Its population is almost entirely made up of mutants who have been exposed to conditions on the surface. The Polar Alliance leases Xal's services to operate several of its surface factories. Xal is also a laboratory, financed by the Watchers, that studies mutations caused by life on the surface. This base is, for the most part, very little known among the public. The inhabitants worship the sun, which they have baptized Xal. Recently, Xal has been purchased by Cortex.

YUKA

Population: 3,000	**Fertile population:** 10%
Depth: -255 m	**Mutant population:** 10%
Community type: 1 complex	**Government/ruler:** council/Leminsk Terad

Created by former scavengers, this entirely new community has impressive resources at its disposal. The veins that it mines are promising and chances are high that Yuka will expand soon.

ZEMBLE

Population: 6,000	**Fertile population:** 11%
Depth: -210 m	**Mutant population:** 12%
Community type: 1 complex (4 under construction)	**Government/ruler:** council/Taylor Smith

On the brink of ruin, the community of Zemble has discovered an enormous deposit of precious metals in the region. Since then, it has been hiring independent workers non-stop and rebuilding an old station that was in a disastrous state. The Polar Alliance has dispatched emissaries to finalize an agreement with the community.

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CHAPTER 1.3

THE WORLD BENEATH THE WAVES

"Life isn't really that tough down in the ocean depths! Sure, it's not great if you're claustrophobic. It's also true that you don't get much in terms of R&R! Yeah, I'll admit that the waters have become rather shady of late, and viruses are commonplace in the underwater bases. But let's not forget the main advantage: boy, is it calm down in the stations! The only sounds you can hear are the soft purring of the oxygen pumps, the whirr of the water filters, the pressurizers, the. .."

— A drunk worker on vacation in Equinox

Humanity has created a new world for itself, a very different world from the old one on the Surface, and it has its own special laws. To live in the underwater world, it is crucial to know what you can encounter there, and which phenomena underwater adventurers can confront. Life is not all that easy for humans under the seas. They have had to adapt to extremely difficult conditions. Some factors have profoundly changed the fabric of society.

Note: even though it is theoretically possible for humans to settle at incredible depths, 99% of the world's population lives at depths shallower than 1,000 meters. As a consequence, most vessels, stations, and armors have been designed to function at relatively shallow depths.

ADVENTURE

Some people choose adventure to avoid the monotony of life in the stations and large cities. It has to be said that opportunities for adventure are a dime a dozen, given the endless mysteries of the world of the *Polaris RPG*. Those who explore the ocean floors are constantly discovering new wonders—communities that have evolved differently, ruins from the ancient times, strange and unknown creatures, etc.

An adventurer does not survive in the underwater world because of his equipment, but by using his experience, his contacts, and his knowledge. It is more important to know several community leaders and two or three pirates than it is to own the latest suit of armor. This is the reason why the interpersonal aspect of this RPG is essential, and the way that a Player portrays his character is crucial. Don't think that an adventurer will spend all his time diving. He will have many occasions to negotiate, think, be a diplomat, and expose spies, assassins, or the mysterious Proteus. Discoveries and mysteries are essential notions in this RPG.

When the bright lights of the cities disappear, the ocean depths become very dark indeed. Danger and terror lie in

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every nook and cranny. At any moment, one can make an astounding discovery or be killed in an instant. One can discover the remains of a mysterious installation or come face to face with a formidable monster. Unlike the glorious sight of the coral fields, the wonders that can be seen in the phosphorescence of the hydrothermal vents, or the pearly beauty of the Coralian cities, there is nothing poetic about the abysses. They are cold and hostile.

In the background, politics plays a very important part. Not only politics, but also the secrets that remain hidden from the population: who were the Geneticians? What is the Hegemony plotting? Who are the mysterious cyborgs from the Polar Alliance? Why do some people claim that the past is not what it seems to be? Who are the Burrowers? What of the mutants on the Surface? It's only natural for people to be curious. These questions will be the driving forces behind *Polaris RPG* campaigns. Most of them will play out in the corridors of the stations and not in underwater combat.

ANCIENT RUINS

Ancient ruins are haunted by looters attempting to retrieve every ancient artifact they can. The buried remains of these cities conceal both mysteries and treasures for which some are prepared to pay huge sums. But they are also the lairs of formidable monsters and the life of a looter is very dangerous. Most of these ruins are situated at depths of less than 200 meters. There, one is partialy subject to whatever meteorological conditions prevail on the surface.

BLACK SMOKERS

A black smoker is a form of chimney that takes shape along the oceanic ridges and can reach 20 meters high. They are created by the cooling magma as it comes into contact with water. Black smoke constantly pours out of them.

In close proximity to these chimneys, the water reaches a temperature of 350°C, only to drop to a temperature of 2°C a few centimeters further out. The water is poisonous, rich in heavy metals, and contains radioactive particles as well as hydrogen sulfide.

Secondary springs, further away from the ridge, warm the water to a temperature of 15°C. This is the favorite habitat for *Riftia pachyptila*, giant tube worms that can grow to several meters long.

These warm water springs are rife with living creatures, but beware! The black smokers are a danger for most marine creatures, such as dolphins and Hybrids. If these creatures get too close to them they will die of poisoning.

CAVES

The underwater relief is chaotic and varied in form. It is not uncommon to come across underwater caves. In some of them, air pockets have formed that allow humans to breathe freely and are not subject to pressure. Some caves are connected with vast underground networks that can reach the Surface or lead down into the very heart of the planet. Many installations have been built near such caves.

Non-colonized underground networks and caves are the preferred lairs of dangerous creatures and, more importantly, the Burrowers.

CITY LIFE

City living conditions are slightly different from what prevails at the stations. First of all, they are places where members of the various communities can meet. There one can buy, sell, negotiate, and sometimes relax. As such, the cities are always swarmed, with over-the-top activity reigning supreme. Equinox is a veritable hive, after the fashion of all the capitals of the undersea world. Bars are where all the sea's workers rendezvous. There they exchange news and rumors, catch up with their colleagues, and drink a lot. Generally the largest breeding centers and hydroculture installations are located on the peripheries of cities. One notices them immediately when arriving at the outskirts of town.

Hydroculture installations extend over an enormous surface area, brilliantly illuminated by hundreds of towers emitting a bluish light. Installations where marine vegetation is cultivated are not enclosed and myriads of multi-colored fish are allowed to proliferate there. These are the most magnificent spots one can find in the ocean. If the city is close enough to the surface, the fields are a veritable oasis of color and life. This type of cultivation has reached a particularly high level of development in the Coral Republic. Down there many have fallen under the spell of the prodigious scenery.

The cultivation of surface plants takes place under immense domes of molecular glass. There, attempts are made to recreate the conditions of life on the surface necessary for successful cultivation. For that reason the domes are illuminated by day and thousands of fish can be seen frolicking in the vicinity, attracted by the light.

Farming centers are generally in "open water" or installed in the hydroculture zones. They are bound by sound-field generators, which transmit a signal that stops certain kinds of fish from leaving a defined area. For intensive farming, some kinds of reproduction centers are built in close proximity to the fields. These centers consist of glass structures in which the females are placed to lay their eggs. That way their eggs are protected from marine predators. Females can also be artificially inseminated, genetically manipulated in order to increase their yields, etc.

Many people go to the large windows at the breeding centers to admire these city marvels.

In most big cities, night is simulated by turning down the lights. Most sophisticated cities manage to create the impression of a starry sky on their domes, as well. In Equinox, they do not distinguish between night and day and

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the activity level there is always the same, no matter what the hour. The capital of the Coral Republic, being close to the surface, has days and nights that follow the world's natural rhythms.

CHILDREN

Children are extremely well protected. You have no chance of seeing any children under 12 years old in the large cities. From the day of their birth, they are placed in education and conditioning centers. When they reach their full maturity, around 18 years of age, those found to be fertile are sent to the breeding centers. The women are forced to bear children, while men become walking fertilization banks. For obvious reasons, men have greater freedom than women, but they are constantly watched and protected. They are not allowed to leave the station, to engage in a risky profession, nor, of course, to join the armed forces. Often, a fertile man will be known for the number of "litters" he has created. A fertile human is worth their weight in gold. Their children are, therefore, guarded jealously. Until they reach the age of puberty, it is impossible to say whether or not they will be fertile. So, until they reach that age, all children are treated in the same way.

It is worth noting that in the Red League, children are absolutely worshipped and enjoy the very best living quarters and services. In some of the small communities it is still possible to see children playing in the corridors around the base. This is a very rare sight, but it is extremely comforting to see.

The Hegemony practices the most extreme of birth control policies. The Hegemonic breeding centers are veritable baby factories where women are genetically modified and heavily drugged to allow them to endure larger and larger pregnancies. There the men also undergo extreme genetic manipulations in the hope of increasing their fertility, and the best "breeders" are kept under heavy guard. In these breeding factories, fertile humans are only considered to be tools that the doctors constantly modify to optimize their productivity. The children of the Hegemony are given the number of their litter as a surname (the initials of the city they are born in followed by the year and their "serial number").

Children also have to undergo countless tests to determine their abilities. Every nation and every community dreams of one day finding the genius child who will cure humanity's many ailments.

CLOTHING

Clothing is mainly functional. Generally speaking, a person's outfit is simple and reflects their profession. There are, of course, differences linked to nationality, but they aren't exactly obvious. On the other hand, the upper classes love to wear luxury garments. The Hegemonians stand out by their colorful and richly decorated outfits. The Coraleans prefer flowing robes, decorated with specks of coral. Luxurious materials, such as marine silk and perfumes obtained from aquatic plants, or jewelry, pearls and diamonds, are only worn by the rich.

CLONING

Until today, cloning was only possible for embryos, and only on an extremely limited basis. Any attempt at "industrial" cloning and the breeding of clones faced a fundamental problem: the created creatures were empty husks, bodies with no spirit. Furthermore, rapid degeneration was observed in clones.

Recently, scientists of the Coral Republic are said to have perfected a new revolutionary cloning process, but nobody knows precisely what it consists of. If this news is confirmed, it could be the greatest discovery in this millennium.

COST OF LIVING

Measured in Sols, the cost of everyday living and services is fairly high. However, it is worth remembering that the basis of the general population's commerce is barter. Thus, a worker with an average wage of 2,000 Sols per month will always have plenty of belongings to trade, which increases his spending power considerably. It is common for pilots to ask an electronics technician to fix their vessel's circuits in exchange for equipment. This means that they won't have to pay the 2,000 Sols per day for the labor. As a general rule, most common products can be obtained by trading. More sophisticated equipment, however, such as medical intra-probes, may require payment in hard cash, unless it can be obtained on the black market.

Maintenance costs on the stations are also fairly high and many communities have trouble making ends meet. This is why the smaller stations are often in a severely run-down state of repair!

In the world beneath the waves, it is often not the money that is lacking the most, but insufficient products to purchase. This is not a consumer society where all you need is cash to get what you want. In the world of the *Polaris RPG*, you first need to find the product. This is the main reason why bartering is the chosen method of trade for most of the population. Nothing is ever thrown away in the stations. Everything is recycled, exchanged, or kept.

Eight million Sols won't be worth a thing if your air recycler breaks down.

COMMUNICATION

Sound waves are subject to a phenomenon of absorption and their propagation is modified. Sound travels very fast (speed of sound in the atmosphere: 343 m/sec, underwater: 1,453 m/sec), but it is altered. We won't go into the complex

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details of this phenomenon. It is enough to say that communication is particularly difficult underwater.

In the 6th Century, underwater communication techniques come in several types:

- Fiber optic cables laid on the seabed enable normal and relatively secure communication. These cables are usually deployed between major cities, bases, and some communication relays. At these relays, devices can be connected to the cable and used to transmit audio and video information.

  Smaller cables can be strung between the vessels that form a commercial convoy. All vessels need to remain in formation for this to work. The cables are thin and easily replaced.
- Most underwater vessels use V.L.F. (Very Low Frequency) communication. The absorption factor is very low for signals under 50 Hz.
- Surface beacons have been put in place by several cities and pick up broadcasts trapped between the surface of the sea and the disturbances in the earth's atmosphere. A vessel can rise close enough to the surface to release an emitter/receiver that can communicate with these beacons. It should be noted that these devices need to be changed on a regular basis because of the atmospheric conditions on the Surface.
- Radio waves can also be used. They only have a very short range because of the amount of absorption from the water. Radio waves can only work over a few hundred meters and can be detected or located at two to four times that distance. Furthermore, depth limits the performance of radio systems. They are, therefore, not used very often. However, they can be coupled with a network of beacons spread out over the surface of a territory. These beacons act as "phone booths." They are equipped with an acoustic signal for localization and are connected to one another by optical fibers. It is a relatively cheap and efficient system: ideal for communicating down mine shafts or in the fields.
- Light signals only have a range of a few dozen meters but can come in handy.
- Satellite communications: a ship can launch an antenna up to the Surface to communicate via satellite. Disturbances on the Surface can interfere with the broadcast.
- Communication on the TR (Temporal Reversal) network is a new technology that can send out a transmission into the sea, where it will be recorded by dozens of relay beacons that will then send the signal back to its source along with the deformations it underwent. The signal is then sent out again, modified to take the deformations into account. This whole operation takes place in a fraction of a second.
- Communication guns are stations capable of emitting audio and video information concentrated into an extremely dense beam, protected by an anti-dispersion field. These guns have a short range, under 50 kilometers, but their transmissions are utterly tamper-proof. Nations usually set up networks of communication guns to relay signals.

  The guns are incredibly expensive (around 6,000,000 Sols for the smaller ones) and are only installed by large nations. They can be installed on stations, on cities, on static communication relays, and on the largest cruisers.

It would seem that the Hegemony has recently perfected a new and more efficient communication system that has been fitted to most of its cruisers.

COMMUNICATION INSIDE STATIONS

- **Communicators:** a sort of cell phone. They are compatible with all the communication systems in the stations, but can sometimes be deactivated by local administrations as they require a relay beacon system (electromagnetic waves don't travel well in the cramped corridors). These communications are easy to tap into, especially for the local authorities. A scrambling system is often used, but it can be forbidden in some communities and automatically rejected by the communication system.
- **Radios:** This is a direct communication system. However, its range is limited in the stations. They are far more efficient in open spaces. On the Surface, on the other hand, the electromagnetic disturbances can severely reduce their range. Most communicators can function like simple radios.

COMMUNITIES

There are thousands of communities in the oceans. Most of them are tiny and only house a few dozen souls. Some still remain unknown and have no contact with civilization. Apart from the isolated communities—those who wish to remain so or who simply do not know that there are nations, great cities, and other installations—the population of many stations is known to be terrified that their base's coordinates may be discovered. When it becomes necessary, these communities send out agents to the large sub-marine ports where they are especially careful not to reveal from where it is they come.

The Sub-Marine States Organization (S.M.S.O.) has attempted several times to perform a precise count of every underwater community, but it has never succeeded. The oceans are huge and research resources very limited.

CONFINED SPACES

Under the ocean's surface, living space is more precious than gold. All the installations are cramped, with low ceilings, and full of exposed pipework. With the exception of a few large cities, the amount of space allocated to each person is limited. Only the richest or most respected people

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can hope to enjoy living quarters larger than 16 square meters. Usually, most of the population of the cities has no access to private space. People sleep in public dormitories or, if they can afford to, splash out on a hotel where they can hope to rent a very narrow room. This is true for most cities; in the stations, on the other hand, people paradoxically have access to a little more space (see Life in a Station). People who have access to submarine transport vessels or other vehicles often sleep inside their vehicles, as this often proves to be infinitely more comfortable. Some have even been known to sleep in their diving armor.

One thing is for sure in the world beneath the waves: it's best to not be claustrophobic. In the specific example of Equinox, most certainly one of the largest cities ever built under the sea, there is no hope of finding an even remotely quiet spot, except in the slums. The city's streets are constantly packed; the bars don't have enough space inside for people to sit down. Intimacy and calm are reserved for the privileged, and for the various kinds of dealers who can book isolated rooms in which to negotiate their contracts. The rest of the population just finds ways to manage.

Last, but not least, it is worth noting that most installations were designed for people of average build. Those who are particularly tall or large are, therefore, constantly uncomfortable.

CORAL

The coral fields cover 20% of the seabed. They can mainly be found on continental shelves; however, nowadays they can also stretch out into deeper water, forming layers of black coral. The coral exists in every possible color and variety. The coral is continually progressing in every sea on the planet. Nobody knows where this development will end.

The coral fields are mostly found in the Caribbean, in the Pacific, and around what was known as Australia. The coral has adapted to the new and chaotic conditions that now govern the planet's ecosystem. Although the fields were once damaged by ultraviolet light, now they feed on it. They also provide oxygen, absorb hydrogen, and purify the seabed. Wherever they grow, life springs abundantly and the whole area crawls with creatures and plants. Amazingly, the coral fields have the remarkable particularity of having a collective conscience that allows them to communicate with some individuals. They can also generate defense fields in some areas inhabited by humans. These fields jam electronic signals and can accumulate an amazing amount of energy. The scientists of the Coral Republic are said to have developed devices that can feed off this energy. Some say that the coral is responsible for the Polaris Effect.

CURRENCY AND TRADE

The official currency of the underwater world is the Sol, but it is very rare to use money to pay for anything at all. Barter is the basis of most transactions. To buy electronic devices, it is easier to offer two or three new torpedoes in exchange. If trading is almost systematic between individuals, it is also frequently used between states in the form of commercial agreements. A state wishing to purchase a cruiser from the Hegemony can offer mineral resources or a mining claim rather than cash.

Everything can be traded: equipment, services, objects from ancient times, living creatures, etc. The Sol is only used for a tiny fraction of commercial transactions. It is accepted by everyone, as it can be exchanged for equipment in the large cities, but it is not the best selling point when one is negotiating a deal.

The Gamemaster and the Players will notice that each piece of equipment listed in the **Gear** section has a price in Sols. This price is just an estimation of the exchange value of the item and it does not represent its true value. It can be rather surprising to imagine swapping a torpedo, even an out-of-date one, for an oxygen filter, but you have to realize that an oxygen filter is absolutely vital in some sub-marine installations. The Gamemaster is free to change these values if she deems it necessary. The value should be based on the rarity of an item rather than its real price.

Sols are physically represented by small rectangular tags with different colors for different values. A white tag is worth 10 Sols, a green one is 50 Sols, a red one is 100 Sols, a blue one is 500 Sols, and the black ones are worth 1,000 Sols. The Sol is the international currency created by the Cult of the Trident. They are the only organization authorized to mint the currency.

CURRENTS

The position of most currents is well known. In general, they are not very strong, their speed being only a few knots. However, some currents are more unpredictable than the flows, and incredibly violent. They can be found at any depth. They are usually mapped, but they can change their position and take careless navigators by surprise. Each current is characterized by its speed in knots, its intensity, and its direction.

DEATH AND BURIAL

Death is not a taboo subject. No one has any hang-ups about discussing it or doing so in a humorous way. Most think of death as a liberation or that the spirits of the dead become one with the Polaris Flux.

Methods of disposing remains vary from one community to another, but cremation is the most common. Otherwise, they settle for simply disposing of the body at sea. In the largest communities, some bodies are retrieved by the authorities to be used for medical and genetic research. Elsewhere, bodies are completely recycled and put to many different uses.

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DEPOTS LEFT BY THE EMPIRE OF THE GENETICIANS AND THE AZURE ALLIANCE

Before their ultimate defeat, the Geneticians created dozens of depots in which they locked away all their secrets. These depots are the most sought-after treasure of all. Unfortunately, they are very well hidden and, more importantly, protected by booby traps and fearsome combat machines. These depots can contain technological wonders and modern equipment, but even more crucial they could provide secrets about genetics and the history of the world.

The Azure Alliance also established its underwater depots to guard against a return of the Geneticians.

Discovery of a mysterious depot

DIET

The average diet is mainly focused on food found in the sea. Seaweed, plankton, fish, and crustaceans are enough to feed the population. However, in some of the larger cities, aboveground farming can be found and even, in a few very rare cases, livestock farming of certain animal species. These species are, of course, closely protected. It is common knowledge that the Hegemony has farms in its capital, where chickens and bovines are raised as well as corn fields. The techniques that allow these livestock and crop farms to exist are, of course, well-kept secrets. The products of these farms are usually reserved for the elite, and served in the best restaurants in Equinox. It is said that several pirates would readily attack a freight convoy if they discovered it to be transporting this kind of food.

Synthetic beef also exists, and it is said to be delicious. It can be found on the black market and in large cities.

DRINKABLE WATER

Water is a rare, rationed resource. Permanent citizens of a station or a city are allowed one liter of "pure" water per day and per person upon presentation of their ID (Identification card) at the water distribution service. This pure water is barely better than the recycled water, but it has the advantage of being drinkable and full of antibacterial agents. The water used to supply the public showers, for example, is specially treated to fight infections: IT IS NOT DRINKABLE. Any poor soul who might try to use it to quench his thirst would soon experience severe stomach problems.

The technology allowing sea water to be transformed into freshwater is not all that complicated but remains expensive. Therefore, not all vessels or underwater stations are equipped with filter systems that can produce drinkable water (the equivalent of treated water). The process, as well as being expensive, also mixes a substance with the liquid that gives it a greenish hue. The company, Aqua Life, which produces over 60% of these systems, claims that this substance is necessary to obtain drinkable water at a lower cost, as completely pure water is incredibly expensive.

Some scientists have submitted the theory that, since the great catastrophes, sea water has undergone a number of changes that makes it harder to desalinate due to the presence of some micro-elements that can only be eliminated by adding a special substance, or by a long and costly treatment process. If this theory was incorrect, there would be only one explanation left: the water production companies are voluntarily limiting the treatment of the liquid for commercial reasons.

Recently, water-recycling suits have appeared on the market. These suits allow a person to survive for ten days or so by recycling their urine and sweat. After a given amount of time, the user must change the suit's filters and avoid wearing the suit for at least 1 week in order to to rehydrate himself correctly.

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Many communities also exploit natural freshwater sources that spring up from the seabed or along the shallow coastal waters. These "freshwater fields" are especially easy to spot because of the huge underwater "balloons" floating above the springs to capture the freshwater (which is lighter than sea water). Great convoys transporting freshwater have also been seen recently, dragging the freshwater in enormous transparent nets. This water is sold to the poorest communities. The freshwater springs are usually found in shallow waters near large rocky formations.

Some communities near the dry lands also use vast systems to capture and reuse rainwater. Although this water is contaminated, it is naturally filtered by the rocks before it is stored in gigantic tanks. After that, this water is treated before being sent to the stations via pipelines.

Finally, it is worth noting that huge underground reserves of water have been discovered recently (some say the equivalent of four oceans) in the form of a crystal called wadsleyite. As they can only be found beyond at a depth of several kilometers, their exploitation is incredibly complicated, but could help to solve the problem this precious resource's scarcity.

ENERGY

Humans know how to use several forms of energy. Fusion reactors, a technology provided by the Geneticians, are becoming increasingly rare, as fewer and fewer communities know how to take care of them and nobody knows how to build new ones. Other energy sources are used, such as thermal springs (magma), nuclear fission, oil, hydrothermal energy, coal, geothermal energy, etc.

Recently, many communities have installed water turbines that allow them to generate energy by using the currents in the oceans. These water turbines are fairly cheap and only require a minimal amount of maintenance.

The communities situated near the dry lands that have considerable resources also use experimental devices, such as lightning accumulators and seismic accumulators. Hegemonic scientists have invented a machine capable of harnessing part of the energy generated by storms. New solar energy designs are also being investigated.

At the beginning of the 6th Century, the vast majority of diving armors were equipped with mini fusion reactors, which were mass produced by the Empire of the Geneticians. However, these reactors being extremely technologically advanced, they are becoming scarcer and none of the communities have the technology necessary to make more of them. And so, once again, people are beginning to use the good old high-capacity batteries again, cables tethering the diver to the electric generator on his base or his ship, or even radio-isotope thermoelectric generators. Underwater or terrestrial vehicles can also use fusion, but nowadays the vast majority of them use other energy sources, such as nuclear fission or even diesel fuel.

FAMILY

It is somewhat delicate to talk about family in the world beneath the waves. People no longer have any concept of family groups and, due to sterility, children no longer contribute to solidifying the relationships between men and women. Therefore, there are virtually no more real family structures. However, in small independent communities this notion has been preserved and, according to some rumors, there are some ceremonies that connect two humans for life.

In spite of all this, many people still believe they have family connections to others. There are still notions of brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers. This mainly depends on the conditions in which an individual is born. In some nations, people identify with members of the same "litter." If we consider the example of the breeding centers in the Hegemony, any citizen can recognize one of their brothers or sisters by their litter number and the name of the center where they were born. In other states, people can consider that they have several fathers and may even know the identity of their mother. Once again, it is in the smallest of communities that a person can identify their family members the most easily.

Generally speaking, people are known by a single name or a name followed by a descriptive term.

FASHION AND LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES

Fashion depends entirely on the country in which one resides, but as a concept it is on the way out. The vast majority of people dress "practically" and buy nothing beyond the bare minimum necessary for everyday survival. Fashion, as a concept, is really only of relevance to the rich and powerful. In fact, high fashion does exist, but it is just about the only fashion.

The Coral Republic is where leisure time activities are the most developed and where one can truly talk about fashion. There, coral is indeed used for decoration, clothing, and even music-making. The Republic is the only country where there are still public entertainment events.

Searching for television sets would be pointless—they no longer exist. There are no television stations in this world and no radio either, incidentally. Leisure time activities consist of gambling, bars where men or women put their charms on display, and computer-generated music (little by little the songs of marine mammals are replacing this horrible music, as more and more bar patrons prefer the soothing sounds). A few rich collectors have access to ancient artifacts—small metal discs that, if read by the proper equipment, produce music said to be composed by men.

Water-ball is a sport of growing importance in the undersea world. It is played either in enormous aquastadiums (which only exist in Equinox on level 1) or in the open sea. The players wear very light suits and score points by means of a self-propelled drone ball.

Dice games are very popular in the bars. Introduced by pirates, dice come directly from the seedy parts of towns,

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and nowadays some diplomats have been seen engaging in wild gambling sessions in the embassy sectors.

Combat in aquatic arenas is normally forbidden but it is rumored that certain establishments can offer it to their clients. It is a popular sport in the Hegemony.

Recently, a new sport, "power ball," has become quite popular. It is played on fields, the structure of which can be modified in the course of play. Players wear molecular armor and points are scored by propelling an extremely heavy steel ball into the opposing team's zone. This game is incredibly violent and requires prohibitively expensive equipment.

Hyper-respiration pods are more and more common in luxury establishments in the cities. These pods are full of hyper-oxygenated liquid allowing swimmers to freely breathe while immersed. These pods can be public (along the lines of a giant pool) or private (reserved for a few people at a time). The sensations experienced in these pods are truly fantastic, especially if small doses of narcomixtures are added to the liquid. In some establishments the pods are used for aquatic dancing girls.

In the domain of art, luminous underwater sculptures are very highly regarded, yet still very rare.

Artists are extremely rare and are only of interest to the ruling classes. The Coral Republic is the one exception to this rule.

FLUIDS AND MIXES

To be able to move easily under the sea, humans have had to invent new technologies that allow them to break the frontier of the deep and avoid endless decompression stops. Most diving armor suits, installations, and underwater vehicles are pressurized and equipped with canisters to collect carbon dioxide, which result in a cancellation of the effects of the increased pressure. Technologies like hyperalloys and molecular science have made it possible to create structures and joints capable of resisting any level of pressure. However, cheaper non-pressurized equipment is still often used. This non-pressurized equipment uses either fluids or mixes.

Fluids are liquid substances that allow humans to reach extraordinary depths. There are two types of fluids: hyperfluids and neofluids. Hyperfluids are rare and very expensive. They allow an individual to breathe a very light form of water that does not limit his movements. In fact, the diver does not feel like he is filling his lungs with water; it is more like being constantly sprayed with a light mist.

Neofluids are cheap and they can be found very easily. They are very thick and unpleasant liquids. They limit the abilities of those who breathe them. Extensive training is usually required to be able to use these substances. An individual using neofluids without proper training could be driven insane or suffer a fatal panic attack. In some cases, new users have taken their helmets off while underwater because of panic.

Anybody can breathe fluid at low pressure (less than 1,000 m depth), but to dive any further down, a complex surgical intervention is required to change the diver's organs so as to be able to resist the pressure in the abyssal depths.

Mixes are more common and less expensive than fluids. They are used by 80% of the population down to a maximum depth of 6,000 meters, or as a backup system in case of a failure of the pressurization system. There are different qualities of mixes that allow the user to reach different depths and, more importantly, that require different decompression stops. Perfect mixes cost a fortune and allow the user to reach depths of around 6,000 meters with one or two decompression stops. The poorest quality mixes limit diving to depths of 2,000 meters and require many decompression stops. Some emergency mixes make it possible to breathe at any depth. These special mixes are automatically activated when an armor or a vehicle is depressurized. For more information on their effect, see the paragraph **Destruction and "Last Chance" Systems** in the **Gear** chapter in CRB2, page 80.

A few examples of mixes are provided below. Their various values can be altered at will. A quick mix can be very limited in terms of depth. A mix that only requires a few stops may require longer waiting periods. The decompression stops indicate the depths at which the waiting period must be observed. For example, 1,000 meters means that the diver must stop every 1,000 meters. The cumulative time per stop indicates the time of the waiting period for each depth level. The first figure indicates the length of the compression (to dive at a certain depth); the second is the decompression time required (to come back up). Decompression is performed slowly on the way up toward the surface. The time is cumulative, meaning that the duration is multiplied by the number of stops already performed. For example, a diver equipped with NeoStar fluid will have to do his first stop at -2,000 meters for 10 minutes, then at -4,000 meters for 20 minutes. To come back up, his first step will be between -4,000 and -2,000 meters for 12 hours, then the second between -2,000 meters and the surface for 24 hours.

MIXES	MAX. DEPTH	STOPS	CUMULATIVE TIME/STOP
NeoStar	6,000 m	2,000 m	10 minutes/12 hours
Priam IV	4,000 m	500 m	20 minutes/48 hours
Oxy-deep	4,000 m	200 m	4 minutes/6 hours
Terracol	5,000 m	1,000 m	10 minutes/18 hours

Anyone failing to make these stops risks very serious problems and an almost certain death. When diving, a user breathing a mix must be very careful to go through proper decompression before entering a pressurized station or vehicle. This will take just as long as it would if he had gone all the way up to the surface. The same applies to a user in a pressurized vehicle who wishes to perform an extra-

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vehicular mission using a mix: they will need to compress beforehand. All underwater installations and vehicles are equipped with airlocks that allow compression and decompression.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The flora and fauna living below the seas have never been so abundant. The main concentrations of plant life are found at depths of less than 500 meters. However, some can also be found on the deeper ridges. Many mutant species have also developed in the dark depths of the oceans. Last, but not least, the gigantic hydroculture fields, which can be found near large human installations, have enabled the development of plant life by using suitable artificial lighting.

Fauna is abundant down to depths of 3,000 meters. However, once again, some mutant species have adapted to unfathomable depths. Animal life is prolific in the areas controlled by humans, among the corals and on the ridges.

Several marine species of plants, crustaceans, and animals are extremely dangerous for humans. Gigantic predators and carnivorous plants fearlessly attack divers and sometimes even cruisers. However, one of the most vicious and most dangerous species is the *Proteus amoeba*, the secretions of which can eat through the heaviest armor plating. More importantly, it is capable of taking on a human appearance if it has enough time, perfectly reproducing a victim it has previously digested.

GIANT SHARK

After the catastrophes that ravaged the Surface, most marine creatures breathing the air on the Surface died out, but some, like dolphins and whales, adapted very quickly and were divided into several families depending on how they changed:

- Some creatures can now breathe underwater and no longer need to surface to breathe.
- Others now live in symbiosis with a parasite fixed over their blowhole and covering their whole back. The parasite is resistant to the conditions above the surface and filters the air for the dolphin.
- Others live in symbiosis with a parasite that allows them to breathe underwater.
- Finally, most creatures raised on farms have been equipped with exo-respirators by humans.

FRONTIERS

It is almost impossible to define and enforce a state's precise frontiers. However, every possible resource is engaged to control intrusions into a given territory as well as possible. To do this, nations use autonomous detection bases, frontier posts, sleepers, or floating mine fields, as well as regular patrols.

The autonomous detection bases are a nation's "ears." They are stations equipped with passive sonars that listen to the sea and signal any intrusion into the nation's underwater space. These stations are often armed and, in case of an alert, they can be activated and engage the enemy in combat. They generally transmit their information either by communication cables or via communication guns.

Frontier posts are military bases situated in strategic locations along a frontier. They perform the same operations as the autonomous detection bases. The main difference is that these stations are controlled by humans, and therefore can react immediately in case of intrusion, thanks to their garrisons. Their sonar is often set up in passive mode so that they are not detected.

Sleepers are automatic sentry guns buried below the surface of the seafloor or in the walls of any available reef. Their detection capacity is very limited, but their firepower is impressive. When they detect an intruder in their surveillance area, these sleepers usually trigger a communications beacon situated within a range of a few nautical miles and warn the intruder that they must change their course or identify themselves. If the intruder refuses, the sleeper opens fire.

Floating mine fields are installed to completely close off access to a given area. These mines can be simple explosive charges or torpedoes with targeting heads. They can be found floating in mid-water, held in position by tiny back-up thrusters, or buried in the sand. Mines only react to targets close to them. Their role is not to identify a target but to eliminate it.

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GENETIC AND PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH

These two research areas are certainly the most important for the great nations and the corporations. For pharmaceutical and genetic research companies, there is no law—all that matters is results. In general, security forces have strict instructions to never do anything that might interfere with the activities of these corporations. Researchers no longer bother themselves with such niceties as experimenting on animals first or drug trials. Drugs are tested directly on people (usually volunteers, but not always), and as soon as something looks like it will work it is applied rapidly to the rest of the population.

Genetic engineering has made enormous progress, but its evolution has been somewhat chaotic. This has yielded breakthroughs in various fields: hypergravity treatments have resulted in enhanced heat tolerance and increased lifespans, it has become possible to increase a person's strength by implanting them with a gene coded to synthesize certain hormones, mutagenic drugs enable temporary mutations, proto-limbs can replace limbs, and the culture of "fisherman's worms" furnishes almost limitless quantities of blood compatible with any blood type.

HEAT FLOWS

Heat flows are layers of temperature-differentiated water that get rapidly colder with greater depth. They mix strong currents and variably intense electromagnetic disturbances. They are never static and vary vertically depending on the weather conditions above the Surface. They can be found at depths between 500 and 8,000 meters. They are often described as gigantic tunnels with a diameter varying between about ten meters and several kilometers. A heat flow zone acts, for sonars, like a mirror from which their waves simply reflect. Therefore, it is very difficult—nearly impossible—to detect anything that is inside or on the other side of these flows. Navigating inside them is also very risky, as sensors are almost always dead, defensive screens deactivated, and ballistic computers neutralized.

The underwater nations often set up defense and detection stations inside these flows. These stations, known as fluctuating stations, move up and down with the flow and deploy networks of sensors outside the edges of the phenomenon to detect enemy vessels. Equinox is located at the heart of a convergence of several heat flows. The center of the convergence is not affected by these flows. Furthermore, the currents cross and uncross themselves, producing access areas where vessels can navigate without any risk at all. These safer areas are rarely found in the same places and are only detectable from Equinox.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

The history and culture of the world are not at all well known to those who live under the seas. These sciences are considered to be reserved for a few scholars. The population can consult the few who have mastered recent history and geography, but their services remain expensive.

Historical details prior to year zero are almost completely forgotten. As for the years before the great catastrophes that forced humanity to seek shelter beneath the waves, the only knowledge of them comes from what has been found in the ruins of that civilization. Even the most competent scientists get the various periods of human history mixed up and they have great difficulty establishing a precise timeline! For most people, history before year zero means almost nothing, or just forgotten legends. It is, however, surprising to realize that a little more is known about the world before the catastrophes than is known about the Empire of the Geneticians.

HYGIENE, ILLNESSES, AND LIFE EXPECTANCY

Good hygiene is essential to survival in the underwater cities. In an enclosed environment, a virus can be catastrophic for a community. People keep themselves clean, because poor hygiene is a crime. Hygiene services are powerful in every nation. They not only make sure that people keep clean, but they also frequently check the population to detect any trace of contagious infection. Thankfully, epidemics are pretty rare under the seas. However, artificial viruses are becoming increasingly troublesome. There have been several cases of entire communities being quite simply wiped from existence by some form of contamination or another.

The case of Equinox speaks volumes. Any careful observer will notice that the city is divided into several zones, and each one can be isolated from the others. Although these systems are mainly intended to isolate a section in case of flooding, they were used once in the city's history to "cleanse" a quarter and all of its inhabitants. The zone was completely incinerated because traces of an especially dangerous virus had been detected there.

Basic notions of hygiene are taught to children very early and every community provides their population with public showers and water stations. The water used in these cases is not drinkable. It is specially treated to actively fight all known infections. Bear in mind that any citizen has the right to consult the counselors of the hygiene services, free of charge, if he feels unwell. This type of consultation is, of course, risky if the patient is found to be carrying any kind of unknown illness.

It is worth noting that many stations are equipped with revolutionary systems to detect bacteria and viruses. These systems are deployed in high-passage areas and change color if a dangerous virus or bacteria is detected.

Many scientists ponder the extraordinary resistance of the humans who live under the seas. Indeed, apart from a small number of very local and fairly rare phenomena, illness is in decline in the stations. Humanity's biological mutation is a well-known fact, but it does not explain everything.

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Some scientists have advanced the possibility of a micro-molecular network that could have been created by the Geneticians, a surveillance network that controls bacteria and viruses. For the moment, no proof has been found to confirm this theory.

Despite their rigorous lives, deep sea inhabitants' life expectancies are fairly long. If violent deaths are discounted, a man can expect to reach the age of 74, and women live to 82 years on average.

INFORMATION

There are no media outlets in the world beneath the waves. There are no television news bulletins or written newspapers. In the best cases, in the largest cities, the authorities are in charge of broadcasting information. These official bulletins are only related to the city and rarely include entertainment.

The communities are completely cut off from the rest of the world, and information is worth more than gold. This explains why strangers are welcomed to the stations with a mix of apprehension and curiosity. There is always a fear that a visitor will be a pirate or a a virus carrier, but what they have to say is eagerly awaited by all. Only visitors bring news of the outside world. They are also the only ones who can give the community's inhabitants a change of conversation and, more importantly, get information from them in turn.

Some people, often travelling merchants, have become specialists in exchanging information. They are called Storytellers or Visitors. They travel from station to station, selling their wares and telling their stories. They never ask for payment for their information, but give it freely. Generally speaking, the inhabitants of a community generously reward these people who are their only connection with the outside world.

Of course, these stories are often exaggerated and quite stray the truth, but the important part is that the core remains factual and that people are able to forget their daily routine and loneliness for a while.

INSTALLATIONS AND UNDERWATER COMPLEXES

Important note: 99% of stations are found at a maximum depth of 4,000 meters. The vast majority of these stations don't exceed a depth of 1,000 meters.

The cities, stations, and underwater bases vary widely in terms of size and design, but they can all be categorized in one of the following types:

Fluctuating installations: a fluctuating structure is not fixed to an ocean wall or floor. These installations float in mid-water and can adjust their depth. Fluctuating cities such as Equinox are very rare. They are complicated to design and, most importantly, they are prohibitively expensive to build. The most common fluctuating structures are military bases, communication stations, and abyssal energy factories.

Cliff-side cities: many cities and installations are built into the ocean walls. These installations are underground, with access to the ocean. They are safer and more stable than other types of installation, but they are frequently attacked by the Burrowers if they are built along the shorelines.

Aquatic cities: these cities are built on the seabed just as if they were cities built aboveground. They can be made out of waterproof buildings or, like Azuria, of rocky outcrops dug out and equipped by humans. These installations are very rare.

Complexes: these installations are the most common type found under the oceans. These huge networks of metal structures spread out over vast areas, lighting up the sea with their blue floodlights. They are built like classic bases or stations.

Domes: complexes and aquatic cities can be covered by domes made out of a damage resistant material. This is quite common for underwater complexes but very rare for cities. Keryss, the capital of the Hegemony, is the most famous example of a domed city. The domes are usually made out of Plastitanium, Alon (a transparent ceramic), molecular Alon, or hyper Alon, and they are often equipped with protective blinds made of molecular steel that can be closed in case of danger.

Most underwater stations are designed with earthquake protection systems. Using the science of hyper-materials, the vast majority of underwater stations and vessels are pressurized at one atmosphere. However, there are still some stations, usually situated at less than 500 meters from the surface, that are not pressurized. These are called surface stations.

Surface stations: some stations situated at depths of under 500 meters are not pressurized. Their structure is very lightweight, as they don't have to resist high pressure—just the currents and the occasional earthquake. Access to the water is by way of a pool system, which removes the need for airlocks. Their inhabitants don't need heavy diving armors, just basic diving equipment. These stations provide more space and are less partitioned as they are not exposed to high pressure. However, the time required to pressurize or depressurize when arriving at or leaving these stations is so long that it isolates the people who live there. On the other hand, some laboratories or research centers have chosen to use stations pressurized at more than one atmosphere, as an extra security measure.

Abyssal stations: these stations are pressurized, usually at one atmosphere, although a few of them have a pressure equivalent to that of the surface stations. They require a very heavy structure to be able to resist the pressure, and they cost a lot more. They have no direct access to the water, relying instead upon airlocks. They are partitioned to prevent catastrophic leaks. Space is a luxury in these stations.

Many communities install the population's living modules at a depth of less than 500 meters and the production complexes at a greater depth.

Note: most station modules used today were built during the time of the Geneticians, using a technology that is

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slowly disappearing. Furthermore, the stocks of modules are beginning to run out. Thus, new modules are being built using materials that are much less efficient, but cheaper and easier to find. This means that these stations are set up as close as possible to the surface and those at depths of more than 10,000 meters are being progressively abandoned.

In some isolated areas, communities produce concrete structures with an outer shell made of steel or titanium. These modules have turned out to be damage resistant and cheap.

LANGUAGES

A wide variety of dialects exist. They are either derived from the common language, Azuran, or from Earth's ancient languages. Each large community and each social class has a distinguishing language or dialect. The widest range of languages is found in the pirate realms for, as well as their common language, each group or fellowship of pirates has its own dialect. Aside from Azuran, the main known languages are Neolan (language of the engineers), Absolanese (language of the diplomats), Metelan (language of the scholars), Inesisian (language of the priests of the Trident), Exonese (language of the dolphins that requires a radio device), Ithraxian (universal language of pirates), Solean (language of traders), Klanese (language of miners), and Enefid (language of spies). Azuran can be spoken in two different ways. Most of the population uses the modern version of the language, Neo-azuran. Some scholars still speak in ancient Azuran, a more noble form of this language, but rather difficult to understand. Isitacian is a very common language in the Coral Republic. Incidentally, few people still speak the language of the Geneticians, called Arkonian.

LAY OF THE LAND

Dry land constitutes only about 20% of the planet's surface, since the melting ice caps and other phenomena have dramatically expanded the extent of the oceans. Between the coast and the open extends the continental shelf. It covers 20% of the planet and can reach depths of 400 meters. This plateau is where the lushest vegetation is to be found. Ruins of the pre-apocalypse civilizations occur in an area stretching from the shore to a depth of 200 meters. What remains of these ancient cities is engulfed in seaweed and infested with predatory amphibians. These near-surface sectors can be very dangerous since they are also affected by the meteorological conditions prevailing on the surface.

Next is the continental slope, furrowed by undersea valleys or canyons. It descends at a gentle decline down to a depth of 2,000–3,000 meters where it joins up with abyssal plains. This slope is where most present-day human cities are located.

The abyssal plains occupy 55% of the planet's surface and can reach depths of up to 6,000 meters. This is where the principal production and extraction sites are located. These plains are interrupted by hills some hundreds of meters high and sometimes by veritable mountains, most often volcanic, that can reach relative heights of 6,000 meters.

The abyssal trenches, which comprise little more than 4% of the surface of the planet, descend into abysses that can run as deep as 15,000 meters or more. Lastly, the abyssal faults, which are extremely rare, can reach depths of up to 25,000 meters. This is the realm of the monsters of the deep, of the Cylast mines, and the richest veins of tri-terranium. The ocean floor is rarely flat. The Pacific, for example, is famous for its notorious forest of submarine mountains, some of which extend all the way to the surface and beyond.

LAW

Justice under the seas is at the same time strict, permissive, and summary. It is especially strict in some areas, such as pollution, respecting the independence of a community, fertility, and anything that can directly endanger the survival of an installation. For example, a saboteur or an individual who causes, even accidentally, a serious incident that affects a city's working state, is immediately eliminated. A crime committed against a fertile individual, a child, or a scientist is punished by exile on the Surface, regardless of extenuating circumstances.

The law is also permissive, as it frequently turns a blind eye when it comes to smuggling, piracy, the murder of non-productive citizens, and pretty much everything that doesn't directly endanger the balance of a community.

The law is summary, as it rarely bothers with prisons. A few exist, though, for select prisoners such as thieves and anarchists condemned to forced labor. The Hegemony even uses gigantic jail vessels that transport the prisoners to their prison mines.

More frequently, the criminals are enrolled into special forces that are mainly sent on suicide missions. They can also simply be executed or exiled to the Surface.

In the independent areas, the law is enforced by the Watchers. They have full authority to judge and carry out sentences in every sea and every community. However, the Watchers cannot act in the territorial waters of any nation recognized by the S.M.S.O.

LEGENDS AND SUPERSTITIONS

The people who live beneath the seas are extremely superstitious. Their world is filled with legends and strange stories. The sea is a stressful and dark world of ever-present danger. Nobody laughs when someone mentions the ghost of a dead sailor, a strange glow spotted in a bottomless abyss, or strange signals picked up by a detection base. Almost everyone carries a lucky charm. Shark's teeth, the bloody flag, the legend of the phantom ship's boy, the sunken city of Teneris... all these stories, all these superstitions, they

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are a part of daily life for the inhabitants of the world beneath the waves.

LIFE IN THE STATIONS

What is everyday life like for an average person in a community? It's a life filled with work and routine. There is no retirement in this civilization and no social rights. A person either is productive or not. For those who have not opted for adventure, life is hard. One does not work towards a future, but for day-to-day survival. As a direct result, many workers at the bottom of the sea indulge in an array of drugs in order to escape the harsh realities of their everyday lives. Drugs are the bane of both mining and energy production facilities. States half-heartedly fight this vice's spread, with disappointing results.

The residents of the small undersea stations benefit from a little more personal space than their counterparts in the city. It's not uncommon for each crew member to have his own private cabin, however cramped. They are also happier because there is more camaraderie and responsibility than in the big cities. It should be borne in mind, however, that they are a favorite target of pirates.

The happiest are definitely those engaged in undersea agriculture. Even though the work there is as hard as anywhere else, the people are more relaxed. This is particularly evident among dolphin farmers, who maintain a very special relationship with their animals.

Either no distinction whatsoever is made between night and day, or, at most stations, it is determined by the times set for meals and shifts. As a general rule, people sleep 6–8 hours a day and work 8–10 hours.

The absence of natural light is a real problem that has to be dealt with in order to avoid widespread depression among the population. That's why stations are most often illuminated with special high-powered lights.

Care is also taken to furnish the relaxation area with natural or artificial vegetation, pleasant ambient sound, artificial animals, and sometimes even with small laboratory-raised animals.

MUTANTS

There are three types of mutants.

Those with visible deformities are generally considered to be the dregs of humanity. A child born a mutant has only one chance of making it out alive: being fertile. If that is not the case, the only ones who will accept him are the special forces of the Hegemony, the Techno-Hybrids, the pirates, or the Coral Republic. All it takes is a trip to Equinox to observe the sad fate of these beings. They wander down isolated alleyways and only have access to segregated hygiene services. Should they be accidentally shot by the Watchers or anyone else, few people would even raise an eyebrow. However, some people openly contest this situation, and groups have begun to form among the population that are ready to stand up and defend these outcasts.

Mutants with minor or nonvisible deformities can lead a perfectly normal life. However, some of them have developed mental abilities or physical resistances to diseases that are quite interesting to genetic scientists. When such individuals are detected, they are extended an invitation to come to the laboratories, from which they will never leave.

The third category of mutants consists of natural Hybrids and of those who can use the Polaris Effect. The latter are sought by the Cult of the Trident. Hybrids are generally admired and envied by the population. Those who can use the Polaris Effect are feared and dreaded if they do not wear inhibitors. Uncontrolled powers have led to too many incidents in the past are known to have caused the death of hundreds of innocent citizens.

The multiplication of mutants is seen by some as the natural evolution of humankind. Nature, they think, is experimenting to find a way for humanity to adapt to its new lifestyle. Others blame scientists for the proliferation of mutations.

NARCOFLUIDS, NARCOMIXTURES, AND DRUGS

Some unscrupulous and truly criminal individuals tamper with mixes and fluids by spiking them with narcotics. These spiked mixes can be used deliberately, by people seeking to artificially enhance their performance through the use of fluid, for example, or unwittingly, which can have fatal results. The main problem with narcofluids and narcomixtures is that they are detectable only in laboratories equipped to do that kind of analysis, or when it is too late and their effects begin to kick in.

Narcofluid is the most widely used of these products, since it is frequently taken by those fully aware of what they are doing. There is a wide variety, but the one most commonly used is derived from the notorious psychoplankton. This substance enables one to completely ignore the damaging effects of exposure to neofluid. There are certain problems associated with its use, however.

Narcomixtures function in much the same way but allow one to ignore the immediate effects of exposure regardless of its stage. The problem is that their effects are not neutralized and the victim usually dies, since he does not immediately realize the damage he's sustained. These narcomixtures are often sold instead of performance-enhancing compounds.

There are a wide variety of drugs and narcomixtures that enhance certain faculties or enable the user to accomplish incredible physical feats. All these drugs have rather unpleasant side effects. The most well-known are the psychoplanktons and the neurotropic algae. The most powerful drug is known as "Vulcan weed." This is a mutated seaweed that is only found at depths greater than 6,000 meters. Its effects are at once incredible and absolutely devastating.

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Recently, new drugs have appeared that are beginning to take their toll: mutagenic drugs that alter the organism that consumes them and other drugs with visual or auditory effects. Optical drugs or Flash images are small optical reading devices whose emissions excite certain parts of the brain, provoking withdrawal symptoms once the emissions cease. The same applies to auditory drugs known as Flash harmonics.

OXYGEN

It is only natural that oxygen is the most precious of substances for those who live underwater. It is relatively abundant, however. Special equipment extracts the oxygen present in water or purifies what can be found on the surface. It can be recycled almost ad infinitum; therefore, there is no shortage of oxygen available. Recyclers and air purification systems, however, can be prohibitively expensive for small communities, particularly when it comes to maintaining them. It is no wonder that oxygen purification is a community's primary concern.

It is also necessary to take into account the carbon dioxide produced by human respiration. This cannot be permitted to accumulate in an enclosed environment, and below a certain depth it is not possible to simply exhaust it into the water. That's why all vessels, small stations, and diving suits are equipped with Carbon Dioxide accumulators, which need to be changed regularly.

Carbon gas disposal is not generally a problem for cities, which possess significant underground tunnel networks into which such gas can be exhausted. The very latest system to equip undersea stations replicates the function of gills. This process enables the extraction of oxygen from the water and its diffusion into the reservoirs that sustain the base.

Oxygen can also be produced by cultivating seaweed and by the raising of certain kinds of fish.

POLARIS EFFECT

The Polaris Effect is a strange force that is omnipresent in the world beneath the waves. Nobody knows exactly what it is or how it functions in the the world's ecosystem. Whatever the answer, it is likely that this power is what has preserved the ocean world from the annihilation that destroyed the surface world's ecosystem. It has also allowed the sea mammals to adapt to this new world by filtering the oxygen in the water so they no longer need to breathe in the bad air above the sea's surface. Although it is responsible for a number of the wonders under the seas, the Polaris Flux does occasionally flare up. During these storms, humans are helpless, faced with its incredible power. Fortunately, these disturbances are rare and generally only affect uninhabited areas.

The Cult of the Trident was based on this force and has proved many a time that it can be used by living creatures, either consciously or unconsciously. Some people (less than one individual in a hundred thousand) and many sea mammals have the ability to use the Polaris Effect, but in most cases they are unable to control it. Although it is very rare that a person triggers the Polaris Effect unconsciously, the consequences of that action are usually devastating for that person and for everything around them. This is the reason why the Cult of the Trident has set up a program to help these people to learn to control their gift. See the chapter on **Special Abilities** (page 104) for more information about the Polaris Effect.

POLITICS AND ESPIONAGE

Politics is, as ever, the absolute mistress of everyone's destiny. States engage in a fierce struggle to impose their version of humanity on everyone else. Since the Admirals' Council, the bloody wars have ceased, but that does not mean humanity is safe from another general conflict. At present, the states conspire, manipulate, and position their pawns. What will result from all this, no one knows. What is certain is that without the army of the Watchers and the Cult of the Trident, the S.M.S.O. would have disappeared long ago.

Espionage has become a veritable institution. Agents are everywhere, engaging in a covert war over the smallest bits of information, and are ever on the lookout for the smallest secret. Above all, they always seek the famous Geneticians depots. It is estimated that about 10% of the population of any given base are spies for one nation or another.

PRESSURE AND DEPTH

Most of the known trenches do not go deeper than 14,000 meters. But there are certain faults, extremely rare,

A MOMENT OF PRIVACY

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reaching depths of 25,000 meters, where pressure can reach 2,500 bars or 2,442 atmospheres, which works out to a pressure of 2,550 kilos per square centimeter. These trenches are anomalies in the outer mantle, which is generally found at 7 kilometers below the ocean floor. It is not hard to imagine what would befall creatures and vehicles not adapted to function at that depth. Only the science of hyperalloys has enabled humans to construct vehicles and bases capable of withstanding these kinds of pressures.

Present-day deep-sea equipment and stations are designed to withstand a certain pressure. If this limit is exceeded, catastrophic structural failure results. A man would not be reduced to a formless goo, for example, but all his internal organs (intestines, stomach, lungs, etc.) would be destroyed, resulting in instant death. There are two methods of reaching the depths: breathe water just as the Hybrids do or employ a specially designed vehicle or diving suit. As a general rule, the smaller the vehicle or diving apparatus, the deeper it can go. It is very rare to see combat cruisers operating deeper than 12,000 meters below sea level even though, technically speaking, they can reach incredible depths. Legend has it, for example, that the *Argonaut* is able to reach depths of 18,000 meters. At present, for various reasons, no device has ever gone deeper than 20,000 meters. What is buried beyond these depths no one knows, but it is a major area of concern.

It should be noted that humanity is in the gradual process of retreating from the uttermost depths and seldom ventures deeper than 8,000 meters. This is because of recent policy toward drastic cost-cutting among the nations, in addition to the stockpiles of diving suits and modules made during the era of the Genetician Empire being used up.

RELIGIONS

The traditional faiths have almost totally vanished from the world beneath the sea. Just a few isolated communities that have discovered relics from ancient times still practice traditional religions.

Most people favor the Cult of the Trident and worship the Polaris Effect. It is not a very rigidly defined religion; there are no real places of worship except for monastery vessels. For the Cult, the Polaris Effect is a force that has saved humanity from annihilation. It is an energy that lives in every being and everything, and which Man is called upon to someday master. The divine is manifested in this energy to guide those who are worthy towards a better future. It's a religion oriented principally toward humans and their capacities. Thus the priests of the Trident spend their time voyaging, going to meet people in order to sound out their capabilities and open their minds to the Polaris Effect. They are always welcomed with open arms in civilizaed places, and sometimes even in the Pirate Kingdoms.

The cult of worshipping marine mammals, such as dolphins and whales, is fairly widespread. Coral worshippers can also be found in the Coral Republic. Numerous Hegemonians regard the members of the Council of Patriarchs or the Great Admiral Keryss as divinities. Science and fertility are also the objects of fairly widespread cults. The Polar Alliance has developed a cult around the Primarch Alexander. The Fellowship of the Abyss venerates a vengeful god eager to eradicate all human life from the planet. The Fellowship of the Black Sun also leans toward the Polaris Effect, but its goals are less lofty than those of the Cult of the Trident.

There are rumors of a cult devoted to the Geneticians but no one has found any proof of its existence.

SHIPBUILDING AND UNDERWATER ARCHITECTURE

Pressure is a major factor for architects when it comes to designing both vessels and underwater stations. Because of this, all underwater constructions tend to be either spherical or cylindrical in shape. It is, of course, possible to "dress up" these cylinders and spheres with differently shaped outer cladding. The one condition is that the space between the inner sphere or cylinder and the cladding must be "full" and made of incompressible material.

For example, a cubic storage structure is generally a sphere that has been "dressed" with a cubic outer structure. A substance such as concrete is then used to fill in the "empty" areas between the sphere and the cube (the cube's corners).

Many vessels and structures have been made with rectangular, square, or triangular profiles. However, most still have an internal structure made up of cylinders and spheres. But even in these cases, sharp edges and corners are avoided. They are made softer and more rounded.

STERILITY VIRUS AND GENETIC DEGENERATION

The survivors of the human race have been afflicted for many centuries by a terrible virus that renders more and more humans sterile every year. The origin of this virus is unknown and no cure for it has ever been found. Sometimes the effects of this virus are detectable at birth, but more typically it's not until puberty that it is known whether or not someone is sterile. If no solution is found, it is likely that the human race will slowly die off within a millennium. This problem is, of course, a central preoccupation for every undersea society. Fertile beings are regarded as treasures and protected accordingly. Some people, particularly women, conceal their fertility in order to avoid being sent off to repopulation camps or from being excluded from all "risky" activities. Such people often end up as wanted fugitives pursued by the authorities or bounty hunters.

Another social effect of the virus is that states do everything possible to protect human life. A military vessel is thus seen as distinctly less precious than its crew. Many combat cruisers are equipped with survival modules for the crew. A commander who sacrificed his men in a heroic defense,

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for example, would be regarded by the population not as a hero, but as a criminal and an imbecile. That does not mean that wars are fought without casualties. Quite the contrary, on numerous occasions the Hegemony has demonstrated its power by bombarding colonies. It means simply that people try, whenever possible, to preserve human life. It is more profitable, nowadays, to take prisoners and use them as slaves than to slaughter people by the thousands.

This conviction is shared by just about everyone. Crime is also less frequent. It is more profitable, when settling accounts, to neutralize one's enemies and sell them to human traffickers. But make no mistake; on Equinox, people still get murdered by robbers and psychopathic killers. From time to time criminal organizations make an example of someone, most often by exposing him to the frigid waters surrounding Equinox without a dive suit.

A child, and above all a baby, is regarded as something sacred and venerated by everyone. Only the most despicable would dare to touch a child. He would be hunted down without mercy by the entire community. For these deviants, for killers, and the truly unproductive, the penalty is worse than death: exile to the surface.

Finally, society regards the scientific community as the last hope for humanity. So people truly worship geneticists and medical researchers. They are free to do whatever they want so long as it contributes to the future of the human race. Not only do medical researchers combat the virus, they have also investigated new areas, such as the cloning of embryos and genetic manipulation aimed at increasing the number of gifted children with the potential to someday invent crucial cures.

Genetic degeneration appeared at the beginning of the second century, at about the same time as the virus. It affects a large part of the population and manifests as a variety of deformities and sometimes as true gifts, such as empathy. The degeneration has nothing to do with the virus. It is possible for a mutant to be perfectly fertile.

This phenomenon is better known than the virus. People know that genetic manipulations of the 2nd and 3rd Centuries meant to remedy the sterility epidemic lead to these mutations. The new global climate also influences human genes, and several scientists theorize that humankind mutates in order to progressively adapt to the new environment. Reactions to mutants vary from place to place. A very few communities reject mutants out of hand, while others accept mutants for what they are.

SURFACE AND THE SEA FLOOR

The world aboveground has very little direct influence on the underwater world. Obviously, it contributes in one way or another to the ecosystem of the depths, but very little is known about the phenomenon. The main impact of the surface world on life under the sea is its influence on the currents. It is generally thought that it is dangerous to be within 200 meters of the Surface, but it is rarely risky at all as long as one remains at least a few meters below the waves. The presence of the coral seems to neutralize a significant part of the Surface disturbances, as can be observed in most of the cities in the Coral Republic.

TECHNOLOGY AND METAL

Even though it falls short of Genetician technology, all fields of science have seen an abundance of incredible breakthroughs. Intra-probes enable the automatic healing of wounds, thanks to microrobots that repair damaged tissue. In industry, molecular technology permits the strengthening of metals through the modification of their structure and even the installation of computers at the molecular level. It is therefore now possible to alter the density of objects at the molecular level. The best example of this application is the famous molecular armor that can take form or disappear upon command. Nevertheless, whenever there is a reference to molecular metals, it usually only indicates that the materials have been reinforced. The implantation of molecular computers remains uncommon. Hyperalloys are undoubtedly the technology that has had the greatest impact on society and permitted the conquest of the deeps. Thanks to hyper Alon in particular, it is possible to construct domes or windows of relatively low thickness, yet able to withstand pressure.

The most used metals include steel, titanium, brass, copper, gold, Cylast (ore used for the production of Boron carbide), and tri-terranium (ore composed of titanium and erbium). Polymetallic nodules are also highly sought after. These are rock fragments containing principally oxides of low-grade deposits: manganese, iron, silicon, aluminum, sodium, calcium, magnesium, cobalt, nickel, copper, and titanium. Humankind maintains fortified factories, totally automated, on the earth's surface in order to extract commodities that cannot be obtained from the ocean. These surface installations are also used for all kinds of operations that would be too polluting for the marine environment.

Genetician technologies, such as reality vortexes, metabots, molecular modifiers, phase generators, organic schema projectors, or their genetic research, still rest undisturbed in their depots. Some also claim that "Genetician Wonders" exist that are beyond human comprehension. The only two Wonders that one hears talk of until today are the Gravity Sphere and the Genetic Banks. Certain Genetician technologies are only understood by a select few. Hyperfluids and Geno-Hybrids are, for example, the exclusive purview of the Cult of the Trident. On the other hand, no one nowadays knows how to make the Fusion B alloy of the Geneticians or the Azurean ACS (an alloy that was, however, mass-produced and often found in the structures of the great nations). No one knows how to produce regenerating alloys any more, but after extensive research it looks as if humankind is poised on the brink of a major breakthrough in that area.

Nanotechnology is spreading just about everywhere, particularly the nanotubes that allow the fabrication of

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artificial muscles as well as hyper-resistant cables and almost indestructible alloys.

In the area of vessels and submarine armaments, nations such as the Hegemony and the Mediterranean Union are working to perfect Hypercavitation technology. This will enable them not only to considerably increase the speed of their vessels underwater but also enhance the capabilities of their projectile weapons. Salvo weapons were the first supercavitation weapons prototypes developed by humans. Hypercavitation is a technology based on supercavitation, which permits the generation of a kind of bubble around a vessel moving underwater. In theory, hypercavitation should make possible the development of ultracavitation, which could make even supersonic travel underwater possible.

The main problem with all these fantastic technologies is that it is almost impossible to acquire them. Most people do not benefit from them and settle for tinkering with what is at hand. Only the vital diving armors and propulsion turbines (and even now there are numerous underwater vehicles that still rely on the traditional screw propellers) are easily bargained down. And the situation is deteriorating. Stations lacking replacement parts have to get by using old technologies. In some cases this can force the complete abandonment of a community.

When it comes to diving armors, one sees the reappearance of old models in cast aluminum and with oil bath joints, powered by good old-fashioned batteries. These armors do not permit very deep descents, but at least they are accessible to everyone.

People have access to the barest essentials of survival—nothing else matters. States only engage in scientific research in certain specific areas: weapons, space, genetics, medicine, and anything linked to survival. Thus aquaculture, water treatment, oxygen, and energy production are priority sectors. Comfort will never be a major research priority for engineers.

What's more, access to cutting-edge technology is fairly limited. In the sphere of armaments, for example, the great powers can make use of all the very latest technologies but the rest of the population typically gets by with equipment that is dozens of years old. Another example is that virtually all Hegemony cruisers are equipped with turbine propulsion while most communities still use screw propellers or systems modeled after the fins of fishes.

It should be noted that none of the technological advances achieved by any country can rival the lost technology of the Geneticians, except for those advances based directly on Genetician science.

TEMPERATURE

People spend most of their time in water with a temperature close to 0°C. It is clear that no one could hope to survive for long under these conditions. That's why divers' suits are always equipped with heating systems. In the event of a breakdown, they must immediately get back to a safe location, or they will quickly freeze to death.

TRAVEL AND MOVEMENT

To travel between different parts of a large station or a city, people often choose to take the sea route. The population has access to a large number of vehicle rentals, such as small transport vessels, scooters, personal propulsion systems, or underwater jeeps. Many have their own vehicle. Most adults are equipped with a very light personal wetsuit that enables them to move around underwater.

There are different means to travel from one community to the next. You can use your own vehicle if it has enough range in terms of oxygen, use one of the regular transport lines or, in the case of the Hegemony, you can move from station to station via the underwater tunnels.

Traveling in the oceans is a long and dangerous activity. Because of this, people don't move around much. When they do, they travel to Equinox or another large city to buy or sell their goods or to take a few days off. It is also common to visit neighboring communities. Stations and cities have an obligation to welcome visitors. It is considered criminal to refuse to let a foreign ship dock if it is requesting the aid of the community. It is, however, acceptable to let the vessel dock without letting its crew disembark on the station.

When they arrive in a community, travelers are given a series of medical tests to ensure that they are in good health. Weapons are often forbidden on board stations.

Tourist travel is a costly activity and is a privilege for the elite and the rich. This business is the domain of huge tourist companies that have considerable resources and can deploy gigantic armed vessels. A tourist travel company is often a branch of a large weapons company.

Underwater travel: sometimes people need to travel to the other end of the globe. Such journeys are not all possible with the vehicles owned by the average citizen. They will then hire the services of private companies or, more often, of smugglers of all kinds. Traveling is not always an easy thing to do in the universe of the *Polaris RPG*, for various reasons.

Security is one of the main problems with any journey under the seas. Pirates, monsters, especially violent currents, and criminal organizations of all kinds are just some of the threats that await underwater travelers. In this respect, no means of transport is completely safe. Whether you travel onboard one of the great tourist vessels or stowed away in the hold of a smuggler's ship, the risk of an unfortunate encounter is always present.

Your choice of transport also depends, of course, on the destination to which you are traveling. It is very easy to travel to one of the capitals of the great nations and, in this case, adventurers have several means of transport to choose from. On the other hand, if a person wants to go and visit a tiny exploration station at a depth of 18,000 meters, there is

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a fair chance he will have problems finding anyone who will agree to take him there, and who is even capable.

Underwater transport companies: these companies offer what has to be, at least for the more prestigious ones, the safest way of traveling under the seas. It is also, however, one of the slowest and most ruinously expensive. Large tourism companies provide journeys with clearly predefined stops, in vessels accompanied by armed escorts. These escort vessels often belong to the Watchers, to powerful mercenary groups, or can be provided by the nations that these luxury cruise ships are passing through.

There are two distinct categories among the civilian transport companies.

The companies known as "convoy" companies are specialized in transporting humans as if they were any other commodity. These companies have absolutely no regard for the comfort of their passengers, who often find themselves confined to tubes lined up in the vessel's cargo hold, with only a few corridors available in which to stretch their legs. The aim of these companies is to transport as many individuals as possible in the minimum amount of space. The price for one of these journeys is roughly 0.5 to 1 Sol per kilometer. The ships are fairly slow, with an average cruising speed of 15 knots. They connect pretty much every large underwater city, but they also often connect with the less-frequented stations, established at depths down to 14,000 meters.

The tourist travel companies are split further into three categories: luxury transport, leisure transport, and mixed transport.

The luxury transport category is only accessible to the elite and the powerful individuals of the world. These huge vessels provide spacious cabins and wide-open leisure areas for their customers. They are the slowest of sub-marine vessels, with a top speed of 10 knots. They rarely descend below 6,000 meters down and only connect with large cities. They are always surrounded by numerous, well-armed escort vessels. It is extremely rare for these cruise ships to be attacked. The cost of travel on board one of these ships is between 30 and 100 Sols per kilometer.

The tourist class travel category is less expensive, at around 5 to 20 Sols per kilometer. These companies sacrifice the space available in the cabins to provide huge relaxation areas for their passengers. This means that a passenger can be housed in a tube as small as those used on convoy ships but have the benefit of large and pleasant leisure areas in which to relax. These ships are faster than the luxury cruise ships (15 to 20 knots top speed) and sometimes descend to depths of up to 10,000 meters.

Mixed transports are identical to the tourist class transport vessels, but with the option to travel in "second class"—down in the cargo hold with very little living space.

Nova (Hegemony): one of the largest tourist transport companies, Nova is present in every large city in the world. It only charters luxury cruise ships whose names are especially well known under the oceans. The *Prince of the Seas*, the *Patriarch*, and the *Siren of Keryss* are among the most prestigious of sub-marine vessels. This company's tariffs are incredibly high, and it costs a minimum of 30,000 Sols to travel from Equinox to Keryss. The services provided on board are perfect, however, as is the security. The company is run by Baroness Vilma Terrastet and currently owns a fleet of six luxury cruise ships. The company's most popular lines are: Equinox – Keryss and Keryss – Azuria

Delta-Oceanus (Kingdom of the Indus): Delta-Oceanus is a direct rival of Nova and the rising star of luxury maritime travel. Its fleet includes two cruise ships (the *Sovereign* and the *Star of India*) and a dozen cabin cruisers. This company's rates are relatively high but still better than Nova's. Delta-Oceanus is run directly by the de Rochas family. Its activity is mainly centered in the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

Dolphin (Mediterranean Union): this small company was created only ten years ago. Dolphin has specialized in mixed transport and convoy services. It is one of the branches of Union Industries, a shipbuilding company renowned for designing the *Pulsar*-class frigate. Its rates are average. Dolphin is present in the Mediterranean Basin, the Red Sea, the North Atlantic, the Sea of Oman, the British Channel, and the North Sea.

Siranea (Coral Republic): the former leader of the world tourist companies before the arrival of Nova and Delta-Oceanus, Siranea has run into some serious economic difficulties. Once the owner of a fleet of six luxury cruise ships and several cabin cruisers, the company never fully recovered from the destruction of the *Elenora Callente*, the most beautiful ship ever to sail beneath the seas. Since that event, Siranea has had to sell off four of its cruise ships and is attempting to restructure its activities around its cabin cruiser fleet. Siranea has recently started to build for the military industry. Its first projects should be completed within the next few years. Its rates for pleasure boating are very reasonable. On the other hand, a journey on the *Silver Coral*, its last cruise ship, is prohibitively expensive.

Deep Star (Red League): far behind its main competition, Deep Star only owns a few cabin cruisers but operates a large fleet of small convoy ships that specialize in transporting people to the very deep stations (down to 14,000 meters). Its rates are among the lowest on the market, but the services provided are of very low quality.

Panam (Hegemony): Panam is a small pleasure boating company with lines that run throughout the Hegemony, to Equinox, and the Mediterranean Union. It has a fleet of a dozen cabin cruisers. Panam's tariffs are very competitive and it offers good quality services.

Poseidon (Equinox): this company is a branch of the powerful corporation, Gladius, the main military business owned by the Cult of the Trident and the Watchers. Poseidon is also the company tasked with building the Cult's monastery vessels. It is specialized in mixed transport all over the Atlantic Ocean, but it is easy to find its ships connecting every capital in the world. Poseidon's prices are

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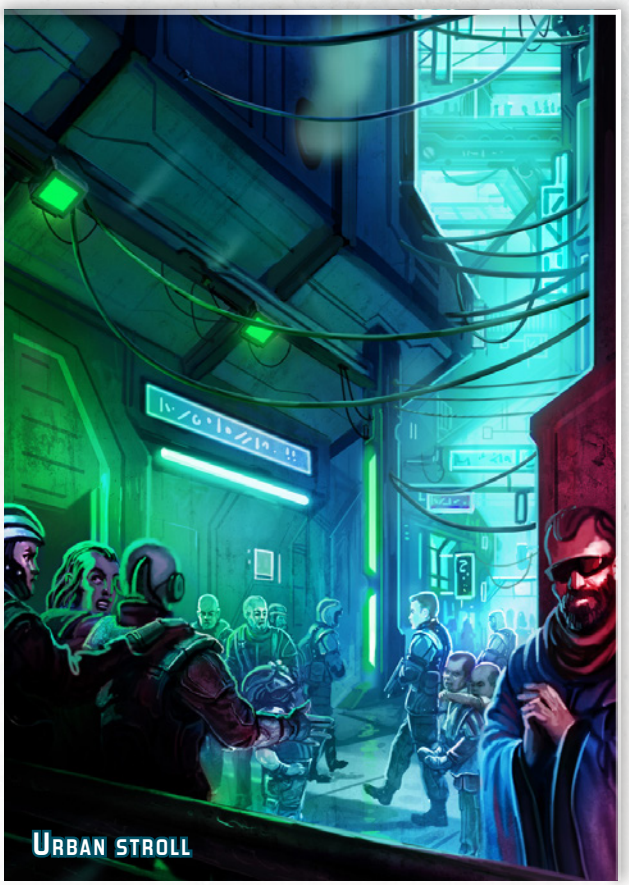
very affordable and its security, provided by the Watchers, is impeccable.

Free Star (Red League): this small convoy company belonging to the Red League is specialized in transports within the nation and to the Coral Republic. The company also runs a regular line to Equinox. Its prices are high but it provides a perfect security service for those who wish to cross the Pacific Ocean's no-man's-land.

New Horizon (Hegemony): this Hegemonic company is specialized in long-distance transport. The further away the destination, the lower the "per kilometer" fare. It is almost exclusively dedicated to convoy transports, but has a few mixed transport vessels.

Telemachus (Hegemony): this company only owns one vessel: the *Telemachus*, a superb cruise ship built by Delta-Oceanus. It is run by the Ebraer family. The *Telemachus* provides long cruise voyages to its customers across every sea on the planet. The offered services are extremely luxurious and the ship is accompanied by formidable protection. In fact, a veritable fleet of warships swarms around the vessel. The price for a cruise is exorbitant, up to several hundreds of thousands of Sols for a few weeks' cruise. The *Telemachus* is regularly visited by the most influential personalities of the underwater world.

Odysseus (Coral Republic): taking advantage of the decline of Siranea, Odysseus now owns a fleet made up of one cruise ship (the *Elysium*) and several cabin cruisers. Its rates are average. It is one of the few companies to have managed to negotiate regular lines with the territory of the Polar Alliance.



Urban stroll

Coralian Tourist Company (Coral Republic): the C.T.C. is directly run by the state. It specializes in transporting the elite and the influential from other nations between the capital cities of the world. Its vessels are mainly cabin cruisers, always escorted by cruisers provided by the Republic. This company's rates are especially high; however, it rarely offers its services to private individuals.

Explora (Coral Republic): Explora is a company that has focused its activity on organizing cruises in the Coral Republic. It owns a few vessels on Equinox but this isn't its main activity. Its fleet is only made up of especially luxurious cabin cruisers, which have the unique aspect of being equipped with huge glass walls and spotlights affording magnificent ocean views.

Freight companies: even though it is not their main activity, all of the freight transport companies can take on passengers. In fact, it isn't the companies themselves who authorize this illegal competition, but the captains of the transport vessels who have nothing against a few extra Sols to supplement their income. The price is obviously very affordable (one-tenth as expensive than a normal civilian transport service, but always fixed according to the customer's looks). On the other hand, the living conditions on board are less than pleasant and the main danger remains the possibility that a dishonest crew will simply strip their passengers of their belongings and toss them out into the sea.

A customer can legally accompany freight that he owns on a transport ship. In this case, his transport will cost a small supplement but it is negotiated directly with the cargo ship's company. It is, of course, also possible to negotiate directly with the ship's captain, off the record. It may cost less, but the passenger will have to face the associated risks mentioned above. It is an especially interesting method for those adventurers who need to transport very heavy material or a short-range underwater vehicle.

The freight companies' rates are, of course, variable, depending on the weight of the equipment, its volume, and its type. It is impractical to provide the full detail of these costs. The Gamemaster should estimate a tariff for the PCs based on the following indications:

Base: 1 Sol per kilometer

Multipliers: 1 per 10 m^3 + 1 per 100 kg

Types of cargo:

Perishable Products: total cost x 2

Common Products: total cost x 1

Valuable Products: total cost x 3

Dangerous Products: total cost x 5

A perishable and dangerous product would have a total cost multiplied by 10.

Here is a list of the main freight transport companies:

Global Oceanus (Hegemony): this huge company specializes in transporting vehicles of all shapes and

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sizes. It is mainly present in the Atlantic Ocean and in the Mediterranean Sea.

Titan Transport (Independent): this company was created by a small independent community named Titan, established in the region around Equinox. It doesn't own freight vessels large enough to transport any type of heavy or bulky cargo, but it makes up for this weakness with an impeccable level of service. The company has signed an agreement with several groups of mercenaries and with the Watchers to ensure the security of its convoys.

Pacific Transport (Coral Republic): a small transport company specialized in transporting food supplies, Pacific Transport often comes under attack by pirates, which is very damaging to its development. In spite of that, it is one of the largest freight transport companies in the Republic.

Red League Transport (Red League): Red League Transport is the world leader in freight transport of all kinds, with 40% of the world's market share in this domain. It is one of the largest existing companies, and owns its own fleet of protection vessels. Its activities range from transporting food supplies, small products, and weaponry all the way up to transporting pre-assembled underwater stations. This company also owns its own truly impressive naval construction shipyards that produce the huge *Colossus*-class transporters, among other vessels.

Unified Oceans Company (Red League): the U.O.C. is ranked second among the freight transport companies, and is a direct rival of Red League Transport. On the other hand, it is the only company in the world to own vessels capable of transporting station modules down to a depth of 18,000 meters.

Polyphemus (Polar Alliance): this small company belonging to the Alliance is, of course, in charge of most of the commercial transport in the Polar territories. It is also unusual in that it offers transport services on the Surface as well.

Smugglers, pirates, and private vessels: another reasonably priced travel option, especially for people in trouble with the law (for whom prices may be a bit more extortionate) is to seek the services of privately owned vessels, smugglers, or pirates. This is usually the only way to reach some bases that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Almost all smugglers are willing to transport people from one place to another for a fee. Some have even become specialists in this type of service. They charge heavily for their services but are proud to claim that they can transport any passenger to any destination. It is rare to come across a dishonest smuggler; their reputations are easily damaged and they would be rapidly eliminated (commercially speaking, if not physically). Some of them own freight vessels large enough to carry small station modules and even small transport vehicles. Of course, the largest concentration of smugglers is found in Equinox.

Pirates are always willing to do travelers a favor in exchange for money or equipment. But beware! You should make sure that you are dealing with pirates who live by the code or you are at risk of being sold off with your equipment to very disreputable customers.

Last of all, it is quite common to hire the services of private individuals. It is certainly the cheapest possible way to travel, but it is also the most dangerous. First of all, you never know who you'll come across, and secondly, the ships owned by these individuals can be absolute wrecks.

Safety and navigation: in most of the large cities it is mandatory to file a navigation plan before setting out to sea. This allows the authorities to control the flow of people and goods, to organize convoys to make it easier to guarantee security, in some cases to apply taxes on exported goods, and to know the (theoretical) position of the vessels, should a problem arise. Of course, these navigation plans can be forged and dispensations can be obtained. Filing and checking these navigation plans depends on the will of the station leader.

UNDERSEA RIDGES (SEE ALSO BLACK SMOKERS)

Undersea ridges result from two tectonic plates moving apart. When this occurs, the surfacing of molten matter and the creation of a new oceanic crust form huge underwater mountain ranges or "ridges." They are 1,500 kilometers wide and 3 kilometers high on average. A trench runs along the center of the ridge; 2 kilometers deep and 20 to 30 kilometers wide. It is in this rift that the molten magma rises to the surface of the earth's crust at a temperature of 1,200°C. These ridges have two fundamental uses in the underwater world. First of all, they are veritable oases for life. For this reason, hydroculture centers are often installed nearby. Most of all, they are never-ending sources of hydrothermal energy. The richest states have built huge hydrothermal stations along these rifts to harvest the energy at the heart of the magma. These gigantic structures can move along a fracture to find a more active source, or to move to safety in case of an earthquake or an unpredicted eruption.

UNDERSEA VORTEXES AND WHIRLPOOLS

Two of the most dangerous undersea phenomena are vortexes and whirlpools. They are impossible to predict but are fortunately fairly rare and never occur near the major human population centers. A whirlpool is a sort of whirling current that forms spontaneously on a vertical or horizontal axis. They materialize almost instantaneously without warning and only last for a short time. A vortex is more terrible than a whirlpool. It is a kind of enormous undersea cyclone and can reach several kilometers in diameter. It always forms on a vertical axis, and, like a black hole, sucks up and pulverizes everything in its path and then expels it into the depths. A vortex both forms and dissipates more slowly than a whirlpool. Their effects are similar; they are only distinguished by their size and duration.

VISIBILITY AND LIGHT

Limited visibility posed significant problems for the first undersea settlers. The world of the abysses is dark. Colors

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disappear below 30 meters and all natural light at a depth of 500 meters. Beyond this limit is a world of shadows that only human technology can dispel. All undersea cities and bases are wreathed in a bluish glow generated by powerful energy fields that create the light by agitating certain molecules present in the water. These energy fields can be installed in any kind of equipment. They are most often installed on tourist vessels. The area they can illuminate is fairly limited, however, and the light disappears 200 meters from the source.

The more conventional projectors with which many vessels are equipped have a range of between 100 and 300 meters. Numerous "farm" facilities are equipped with veritable ramps and walls of light. There are also instances of "natural" lighting, produced by the intensive cultivation of certain kinds of plants and fish. The light produced this way is white.

WOMEN

A woman's place in the communities of the underwater world varies greatly from one nation to another, although her fertility is usually a deciding factor. All breeders are heavily guarded in a manner akin to imprisonment. Any woman capable of bearing children often suffers more than the fertile males, for obvious reasons. In some of the larger communities, many of them spend a significant part of their lives in the breeding centers. In other communities, the Coral Republic especially, they are cherished, respected, and pampered. In yet other places, especially the Hegemony, their living conditions are considerably more dire. The Patriarchs' nation has the terrible reputation of using techniques that aim to improve the fertility of women and the number of children they can carry. These techniques tend to seriously damage their bodies. Usually, the consequence of this is that they are exhausted and their life expectancy is significantly reduced. The same is true of some male breeders who are also subject to severe genetic manipulations.

But more and more people are taking a stand against these treatments that many consider inhumane and, moreover, inefficient if one compares the birth rates of the Hegemony to those of the Coral Republic. Rebel movements like that of Telma Tiltane, perfectly official groups like the Pact of Hera in the Hegemony, the Human Coalition in Equinox, and even a mysterious faction like Themis constitute influential people working to defend the cause of oppressed people – especially the women.

Sterile women are, in a majority, treated exactly like men. They fill the same positions and practice the same professions.

There are some mutants who are capable of reproducing alone. These hermaphroditic beings are rare, but their number is increasing year after year. They are generally confined to research laboratories and those who escape this sad fate are condemned to the life of a fugitive.

We conclude with a brief extract from Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*:

"What you believe to be red meat, professor, is nothing other than loin of sea turtle. Similarly, here are some dolphin livers you might mistake for stewed pork. My chef is a skillful food processor who excels at pickling and preserving these various exhibits from the ocean. Feel free to sample all of these foods. Here are some preserves of sea cucumber that a Malaysian would declare to be unrivaled in the entire world, here's cream from milk furnished by the udders of cetaceans, and sugar from the huge fucus plants in the North Sea; and finally, allow me to offer you some marmalade of sea anemone, equal to that from the tastiest fruits."

"But this sea, Professor Aronnax," he told me, "this prodigious, inexhaustible wet nurse of a sea not only feeds me, she dresses me as well. That fabric covering you was woven from the masses of filaments that anchor certain seashells; as the ancients were wont to do, it was dyed with purple ink from the murex snail and shaded with violet tints that I extract from a marine slug, the Mediterranean sea hare. The perfumes you'll find on the washstand in your cabin were produced from the oozing of marine plants. Your mattress was made from the ocean's softest eelgrass. Your quill pen will be whalebone, your ink a juice secreted by cuttlefish or squid. Everything comes to me from the sea, just as someday everything will return to it!"

"Yes, I love it! The sea is the be all and end all! It covers seven-tenths of the planet earth. Its breath is clean and healthy. It's an immense wilderness where a man is never lonely, because he feels life astir on every side. The sea is simply the vehicle for a prodigious, unearthly mode of existence; it's simply movement and love; it's living infinity, as one of your poets put it. And in essence, professor, nature is here made manifest by all three of her kingdoms, mineral, vegetable, and animal. The last of these is amply represented by the four zoophyte groups, three classes of articulates, five classes of mollusks, and three vertebrate classes: mammals, reptiles, and those countless legions of fish, an infinite order of animals totaling more than 13,000 species, of which only one-tenth belong to fresh water. The sea is a vast pool of nature. Our globe began with the sea, so to speak, and who can say we won't end with it! Here lies supreme tranquility. The sea doesn't belong to tyrants. On its surface they can still exercise their iniquitous claims, battle each other, devour each other, haul every earthly horror. But thirty feet below sea level, their dominion ceases, their influence fades, their power vanishes! Ah, sir, live! Live in the heart of the seas! Here alone lies independence! Here I recognize no superiors! Here I'm free!"

—Captain Nemo

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CHAPTER 1.4

SURFACE, UNDERGROUND WORLD, AND SPACE

"The surface is the domain of great monsters, fearsome beasts with claws that can shred metal as if it were paper. I'm not even talking about the colonies of insects that will melt your armor into jelly. What's worse is that you can't even take cover in a bush or seek shelter in a forest. Those bloody plants are even more aggressive than the surface predators. And as for anyone who imagines doing some sightseeing in the underground... the Burrowers are no vegetarians!"

—Krysss Ker 43 657, Hegemonian soldier

THE SURFACE

What remains of the surface world is a veritable hell. Its vast expanses of desert and mutated vegetation are frequently lashed by energy cyclones or corrosive rain, or bombarded by ultraviolet rays from the sun, the ozone layer having been partially destroyed. The ruins of ancient civilization are stalked by monstrous creatures that adapted to these new conditions. Certain plants, for example, draw nourishment from the intense ultraviolet rays or the toxic materials present in the atmosphere. There are even strange tales of a humanoid race said to have survived on the surface.

It seems beyond belief that anything at all remains of the ancient surface world. In fact, it appears that the surface's extreme climate conditions may have played a role in fossilizing and altering these remains at a molecular level. In this way the hulks of vehicles and the ruins of buildings discovered by explorers no longer seem to consist entirely of their original materials and are protected from the ravages of the climate by glass- or amber-like substances that seem petrified..

It is normally impossible to live on the surface; anyone who goes there must face the ever-present radiation, toxic air, atmospheric acidity, bombardment by ultraviolet rays, and molecular alteration. There are also all kinds of unpredictable phenomena to contend with, such as energy tornados, storms, earthquakes, cold and heat, and corrosive rain. There are numerous monstrous creatures to battle on the surface, carnivorous plants that conceal themselves in unspeakable vegetation, and swarms of purulent parasites.

Needless to say, given these conditions, volunteers are not exactly elbowing each other aside for a chance to go "up top." All the same, sometimes it is necessary to send teams up there. Humanity maintains important surface installations. These are the factories and resource extraction centers that produce materials that can't be found in the ocean or can't be produced there because of the pollution that would result. The most important sites, the last remaining spaceship launch pads, are located in the Appalachians and the Guyanan Massif.

All factories are totally automated and covered by domes made from a kind of molecular steel that is totally inalterable.

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Most of these domes were installed during the era of the Geneticians and the secrets of this inalterable metal are now lost. The few stations constructed in more recent times, at a staggering cost, are decidedly less resistant. The production site can be quite distant from the central factory. In that case, the production unit's computer can send automated devices there. These machines extract the products and bring them back to the factory. Several States have also established research bases to study the surface. These bunkers are occupied by soldiers and scientists. They resemble huge black cubes.

Everything produced in a factory is generally transported toward maritime cliffs through sub-surface tunnels that are also automated. These tunnels plunge deep into the earth and terminate at subsea walls where stations receive the merchandise. Sometimes tunneling underground is impossible, in which case they are constructed on the surface.

Manned patrols are frequently sent to the factories to repair machine breakdowns, for example, or to eradicate creatures that have infiltrated and concealed themselves in a robot vehicle, etc. These patrols access their mission objectives through subsurface tunnels, but even they must venture out onto the surface from time to time. They also have completely enclosed all-terrain vehicles at their disposal.

Let's now examine in detail the various dangers to be faced on the surface.

EVER-PRESENT PHENOMENA

- The surface world is under constant bombardment by radiation of all types. These radiations often vary in intensity.
- The air is so toxic as to be practically unbreathable. Anyone forced to breathe it could only do so with great difficulty and would end up poisoned.
- The acidity of the atmosphere and the constant bombardment by ultraviolet rays attack both living and inert substances.
- Molecular alteration is a strange phenomenon that affects any human organism directly exposed to the surface environment. It alters the genetic code, modifies the chemical composition of the body, and triggers mutations of which the effects are little known.

UNPREDICTABLE PHENOMENA

These phenomena occur on the surface from time to time.

- Energy tornadoes are the most devastating of all surface phenomena, but also the rarest. They take the form of enormous, lightning-studded whirlwinds that obliterate everything in their path.
- Storms are perturbations whose principal effects are rain, lightning, and wind.
- The extreme temperature variations on the surface can be fatal to anyone not protected by a temperature regulator. People can also suffer from exposure to excessive heat. These effects resemble those of the cold but the causes are different.
- Corrosive rains inflict damage very similar to that inflicted by the corrosive atmosphere, but much more rapidly.

CREATURES

Last, but not least, of the dangers facing expeditions come from the terrible creatures that haunt the surface. Some monsters are true giants and can attain sizes greater than 10 meters. The most well-known are the tyrannies, predators whose fantastic forms evoke the tyrannosaurus, dragons, multi-headed aerial monsters, packs of hyaenas, horned snakes, and sinister devourers, a kind of enormous mole that tracks its prey from its underground domain. These disease-riddled monsters feed visible parasites with which they live in a symbiotic relationship. The two natural predators of these creatures are insects and carnivorous plants.

The insects attack in swarms of dozens or thousands, swooping down on their prey and devouring them with incredible speed. These are the real top predators of the surface world, their power only limited by the plants that feed on them. Some swarms, thanks to the acid they secrete, can destroy battle armors or even penetrate the armor of certain tanks. Different kinds of creatures struggle for dominance in different domains. The rhinospiders, for example, are in an endless war with the cohorts of fireroaches for control of the ruins of the ancient world.

The vegetation has also adapted to this new environment. While most plants pose no dangers and derive nourishment from the rays of the sun, atmospheric gasses, and some insects, others attack everything that moves and even have the power of movement themselves. The man-eating sarracenias, serpent vines, smothering taro plants, and the fearsome razor-ferns are as terrible as any other predator. Generally these plants conceal themselves amidst innocuous-looking flora, but there are also reports of entire mobile forests of predatory vegetation. These forests are inert by day and cannot be distinguished from any other form of vegetation. By night, the plants and trees come out of their torpor and attack anything that has taken shelter in them. It is estimated that these mobile forests can reach speeds of 100 meters per hour.

There have been rumors of humanoid creatures that supposedly have adapted to life on the surface. Recently the existence of these legendary creatures has allegedly been confirmed by patrols from the Red League and a Hegemonian Squad. It is said that in Patagonia (South America), a strange city of mutants, Lifendir, was destroyed in the course of a bombardment ordered by the leaders of the Red League. It is likely that there are other mutant cities scattered here and there all over the surface. It is not exactly known how humans have been

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able to adapt to surface conditions, but the research of Meleor Clavius, head of the Valades scientific expedition, indicates that any organism exposed to surface effects will undergo a profound change that will permit the most hardy to survive.

As to the motivations of the surface-dwelling mutants, little is known. They seem to be organized in tribes and have relations with several pirate groups.

THE UNDERDEEPS

The Underdeeps are the hunting preserve of the race most dangerous to humanity, the Burrowers. These monsters beyond count claim all of the underground-world as their domain. They frequently attack the communities of humans who inhabit the inner abyssal walls and are responsible for much destruction on the supply tunnels running between the surface and the undersea complexes. Humankind has been at war with the Burrowers for the past five centuries.

Up to now little was known about the Burrowers. It was thought that they possessed a sort of hierarchy and organization very similar to those of ants, and that they were endowed with only a rudimentary intelligence. Many an exploration team had discovered Burrower lairs that were characterized by rudimentary construction and signs of a very primitive "civilization." Many soldiers claimed to have seen Burrowers using weapons such as clubs in battle.

Recently, however, everything that we thought we knew about these beings was called into question. On June 23, 567, a delegation of Burrowers negotiated a truce with representatives of the Hegemony. Not only was it discovered on this occasion that there were several distinct species of Burrowers but also that these creatures were far from the primitive monsters they'd been taken for. There was nothing whatsoever primitive about their craftsmanship and their diplomats proved to be particularly erudite.

A few months later, the Burrowers broke the truce and made use of powers hitherto unknown. The Hegemonian offensive that followed revealed that all the Burrower lairs discovered to date had been nothing but advance posts. Their real cities are located at the earth's core and can only be accessed via enormous shafts. No human has ever seen one.

Several races of Burrowers exist. The most massive, characterized by their beastlike physiques, are the workers. They are tasked with boring the tunnels and doing all the other physically demanding work. Then come the warriors, large and muscled. The priests, for their part, do not exceed two meters in height and seem much less robust than their fellows. Their tattoo-covered faces are more human. The war masters are by far the most impressive. Exceeding three meters in height, they bear the finest weapons and the most ornate jewelry. Burrowers ride strange beasts, and it was thought that these were some kind of animal but they're nothing of the sort. They are actually Burrowers of slightly lower intelligence than their riders.

Finally, there are rumors of the existence of "peace masters," sages of whom nothing is known.

SPACE

Humankind has put back into operation two sites for launching of space ships, one in the Appalachians, the second in the Guyanan Massif. These are the most carefully guarded of all surface installations because they constitute the only link between Earth and the orbital stations. They are permanently guarded by troops from the major nations and by the Watchers, who maintain order there. Earth does several shuttle launchings each year. The entire program is funded jointly by all nations and communities. The ultimate goal is to find new land or remedies for humanity's afflictions through the conquest of space. The various orbital stations and bases located on other planets constitute a neutral entity. All stations are manned by volunteers who come from far and wide. There, security is maintained by squads of Watchers. Few of the stations and bases have been recaptured by humanity. Most of them are still closed and perhaps contain certain secrets of the Geneticians.

EUROPA

Europa is the principal orbital station circling the planet. Its crew consists of researchers and engineers for the most part. It is also the seat of political power for the spacefaring nations. The population of the station is estimated at 1,850. It is Europa that controls all the satellites still in service and in particular the infamous satellite weapons, true combat stations that provide support to surface expeditions.

TYCHO

This lunar base is the launch-site for all missions to Mars. At present there is only one flight a year to Mars. A variety of research is underway there into food production and mineral extraction. The total population of Tycho is estimated at 25,000.

MINOS

The station orbiting Mars is one of the largest ever made by humankind. It permanently houses over 10,000 colonists. It is a factory-station, a research laboratory, and above all, the construction site for vessels that are supposed to leave for Europa (Jupiter's moon) every two years.

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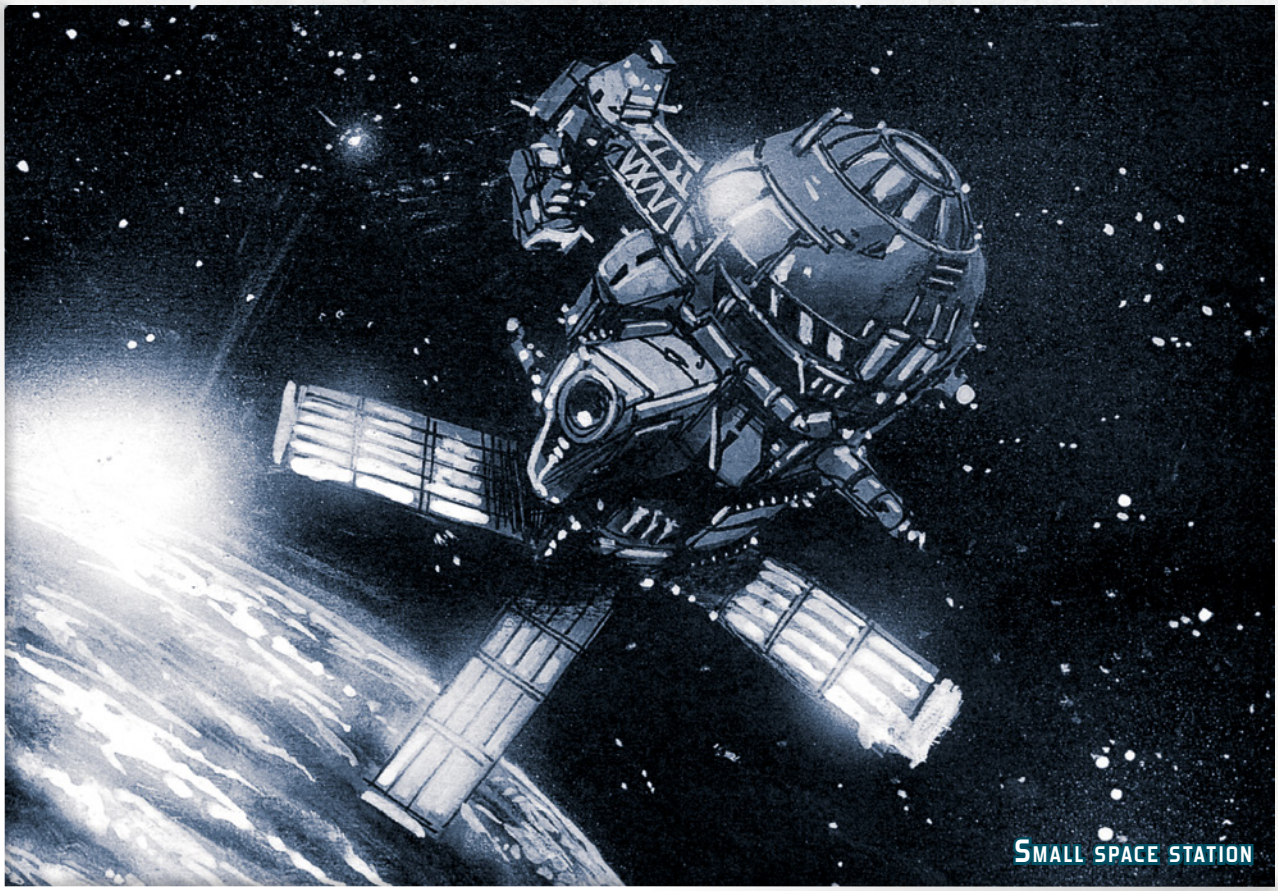

Small space station

TROY

This mining base on Mars houses a community of over 9,000. Its principal activity is the extraction of the mineral riches of the Red Planet.

EXCIS

After the success of the first mission to the ancient station orbiting Saturn, the space station orbiting the moon, Europa, is principally tasked with assembling future space vessels that will proceed from there to explore the rest of the solar system. Recently, contact with the Saturn mission was lost. A rescue vessel is about to be launched. It houses a community of 1,200.

PALLADIA

There is a small base situated on the moon of Europa. Its principal task is to determine if it is possible to colonize this satellite of Jupiter. Its population, estimated at 1,350, is thus composed primarily of researchers.

OLYMPUS

The most distant of the orbital stations established by the Geneticians, Olympus, is in orbit around Saturn. Many eagerly await word from the explorers that have been sent there. During the time of the Geneticians, the immense station was supposed to construct a spaceship capable of leaving the solar system. It is even rumored that the Geneticians had discovered other habitable planets and that the coordinates of these planets could be found on Olympus. Unfortunately, the Saturn mission suddenly ceased transmitting.

X BODY

Before contact was lost, members of the crew had signaled the presence of an object in the vicinity of Saturn, an object they had dubbed the X Body. From the information available to the researchers, it appeared to be another orbital station much bigger than Olympus.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE CHARACTER CREATION

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CHAPTER 2.1

CHARACTER CREATION

"Next! Ah, at last, somebody who looks healthy. Yeah, at first glance, you've got the physical requirements. Do you know how to use a weapon, pilot combat armor, those kinds of things? You don't? So why are you wasting my time, moron? Did you see what's written above the door? Yeah, exactly. You can read, at least. Okay, you don't look too dumb. That's something. So, what's your field? Medicine? Yeah, I see. That always comes in handy in our line of business... Alright, sign this... Don't worry, you don't even need to put your real name. Nobody gives a damn about your past or your real identity here. And nobody needs to know what made you enlist with us. Next!"

—A recruiter working for a mercenary firm, somewhere on Equinox

CHARACTER FEATURES

In this chapter, you will find descriptions of the various elements that define a character in-game as well as the character creation rules.

Note: **all calculations are rounded to the closest integer; thus, 1.1 to 1.5 is rounded to 1 and 1.6 to 1.9 is rounded to 2.**

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES

ATTRIBUTE DESCRIPTION

In the *Polaris RPG*, the adventurers are defined by a number of physical and mental Attributes, whose base score can be modified by various events, technology, or mutations afterwards. These Abilities allow you to appraise the capabilities of a character. There are eight Primary Attributes:

STRENGTH (STR) is the measure of one's physical might and muscular capabilities.

CONSTITUTION (CON) characterizes one's stamina, health, physical exertion, and resistance to, poisons, diseases, traumas, and extreme conditions.

COORDINATION (COO), as the name suggests, indicates the character's neuromuscular coordination, and more broadly his physical agility, balance, suppleness, the precision of his gestures, motion, and movements.

ADAPTATION (ADA) represents the character's capacity to adapt to his environment, and more particularly to a sudden change of situation, the reflexes stemming from his survival instinct and his speed of thought.

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PERCEPTION (PER) determines the acuity of the character's five senses, his alertness, the attention he pays to his environment and to people's behavior, and his capacity for noticing the small details in his surroundings.

INTELLIGENCE (INT) measures one's mental capacities. It is also his aptitude for assimilating new knowledge.

WILLPOWER (WIL) determines a character's mental resistance, his capacity to control his reactions when under pressure, and how long he can maintain his concentration when performing any action. It is also his tenacity, his strength of character, and his will to survive adversity.

PRESENCE (PRE) is a measure of the character's aura and charisma. Its importance is essential in all relationship-related actions: seducing, impressing, commanding, intimidating... Broadly speaking, this Attribute can be used to join a group, to start a conversation with strangers, or to make new connections as it also determines how much trust and friendliness a character can inspire—whether he is sincere or not is entirely another matter.

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL

The Attributes are graded on a scale from 1 to 20:

LEVEL	EQUIVALENT
1–2	Insignificant
3–5	Very weak
6–8	Weak
9–12	Average
13–15	Strong
16–18	Very strong
19–20	Exceptional
21+	Superhuman

Note: for a Player Character, an Attribute can never go below 3. During character creation, if a Modifier were to have an Attribute fall below 3, leave it aside. Later in the game, if an Attribute falls below 3, that character is considered unplayable as long as his score remains under 3.

LUCK

Luck is a special Attribute, representing the character's connection to the hand of fate.. The rules on Luck are presented in the game system chapter. However, you should know that using Luck permits characters to avoid some unfortunate events, to reroll unsuccessful tests, to reduce the seriousness of certain wounds, and even to obtain some clues or some small additional bonuses from the GM! This Attribute should not be overlooked... A character's Luck score is between 1 and 20.

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

The Secondary Attributes are derived from the Primary Attributes.

REACTION (REA)

This Attribute represents a character's speed of response when an action becomes crucial. Reaction is commonly used in combat to determine a character's Initiative—i.e. when he can perform an action—but also during sudden and unexpected events. It also determines whether he can react in time to avoid a possible catastrophe: the character discovers a trap, one of his enemies draws a weapon, a grenade rolls into the room, etc.

Reaction is the average of Adaptation and Perception: (ADA+PER)/2.

MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER

The Melee Damage Modifier applies to Damage dealt by a character in a melee combat, when he attacks with his bare hands or with a bladed weapon. This Attribute depends on the character's Strength:

STRENGTH	MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER
1–2	-6
3–4	-4
5–6	-2
7–8	-1
9–11	+0
12–13	+1
14–15	+2
16–17	+3
18–19	+4
20–21	+5
22+	+1 every 2 levels

SHOCK RESISTANCE

This Attribute represents the character's resistance to the traumatic and psychological shock resulting from a wound. It is used to determine the resistance to blunt damage that can stun or knockout a character. Shock Resistance comprises two values:

- **Stun Threshold:** (STR+CON+WIL)/3
- **Knockout Threshold:** Stun Threshold value (modified by any bonus or penalty) +10

DAMAGE RESISTANCE

This Attribute represents the character's resistance to physical wounds and modifies the amount of damage taken. Damage Resistance depends on the character's Strength and Constitution:

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STR+CON	DAMAGE RESISTANCE
2–5	+6
6–9	+4
10–13	+2
14–17	+1
18–21	+0
22–25	-1
26–29	-2
30–33	-3
34–37	-4
38–41	-5
42+	-1 every 4 levels

NATURAL RESISTANCE

Like Damage Resistance, this set of modifiers represents the character's resistance—or vulnerability—to these four elements: poisons, diseases, drugs, and radiation. Apply the following formulae to each Natural Resistance:

- **Resistance to poisons, diseases, and radiation:** CON
- **Resistance to drugs:** (CON+WIL)/2

Determine the corresponding modifier in the table below:

RESULT	NATURAL RESISTANCE
1–2	+6
3–4	+4
5–6	+2
7–8	+1
9–11	+0
12–13	-1
14–15	-2
16–17	-3
18–19	-4
20–21	-5
22+	-1 every 2 levels

SUSPEND BREATHING

This Attribute enables you to determine how long a character can hold his breath before asphyxiating. Do not overlook this ability with Hybrids, as they may well have to hold their breath in a gas-filled environment.

Suspend Breathing is calculated with the following formula: **(CON+WIL)/2, in Combat Rounds.**

SKILLS

Skills represent a character's knowledge and know-how in some very specific areas, such as physical actions, sciences, techniques, or weapons.

NATURAL ABILITIES (N.A.) AND BASE SKILL LEVEL

When using a Skill, the character also draws from his natural abilities or innate talents, represented by his Attributes. For instance, a character's Intelligence comes into play when he draws from his knowledge Skills, in the same way as Strength and Coordination are essential to the Skills related to physical activities, combat, etc. **A level of Natural Ability**—which will be used to calculate the **Base Skill Levels** (see below)—**is thus linked to each Attribute.** The table below indicates the Natural Ability level associated with its corresponding Attribute level:

ATTRIBUTE	NATURAL ABILITY (N.A.)
3	-4
4	-3
5	-2
6–7	-1
8–9	0
10–12	1
13–15	2
16–18	3
19–21	4
22–24	5
25	6

The Base Skill Level, which represents the character's talents and natural ease at using a particular skill, is directly dependent on the associated Natural Abilities. Each Skill is usually associated with two Attributes—sometimes just one. **The Base Skill Level is equal to the sum of the Natural Ability Levels derived from both associated Attributes. If there is only one associated Attribute, multiply the corresponding Natural Ability by two.**

- *Base level at 0 or less:* bad, the character is not at all gifted for this Skill and can even be seriously hampered by Attributes that are too low.
- *Base level from 1 to 2:* mediocre.
- *Base level from 3 to 4:* average.
- *Base level from 5 to 6:* gifted.
- *Base level from 7 to 8:* very gifted.
- *Base level at 9 or more:* brilliant.

SKILL MASTERY LEVEL

If the Base Level represents a character's natural and innate ease at a particular Skill, the Mastery Level represents his knowledge, his know-how, and his experience. Only studying and training can enable a character to develop a Skill Mastery Level, which is represented by a bonus. The higher this bonus, the more experienced the character.

The "+0" level is the default level for common Skills, which can be used naturally by all the characters (e.g. Persuasion or Climbing).

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MASTERY LEVEL	EQUIVALENCE
+0	Inexperienced
+1 to +5	Novice
+6 to +10	Experienced, Expert
+11 to +15	Master

EXCLUSIVE AND DIFFICULT-TO-LEARN SKILLS

Some Skills cannot be used without any prior training—a foreign language has to be learned to be understood. These Skills are called Exclusive Skills, and their starting Mastery Level is marked as "X" instead of +0.

Some Skills are also particularly difficult to learn (contrary to common Skills, whose initial Mastery Level is +0). They often cover highly specialized abilities, knowledge, and techniques that are difficult to master, like science or medicine. The starting Mastery Level for these Skills (called Difficult-to-learn Skills) is then expressed by a -3 penalty, showing that the character has not mastered all the elementary basics yet and that he needs to finish his training before developing an actual level of mastery.

Note: An Exclusive Skill is also always a Difficult-to-learn Skill. Improving an Exclusive Skill's level by one point moves it to -3.

GLOBAL SKILL LEVEL

Global Skill Levels are basically equal to the sum of Base Levels and Mastery Levels. Skill Tests are performed against a character's Global Skill Level (see chapter **Tests & Actions** on page 200), even though they are commonly referred to simply as 'Skill Levels.' Please note that a Global Skill Level can be negative, because of a mediocre Natural Ability and/or a Skill that is difficult to learn.

GLOBAL LEVEL	EQUIVALENCE
0 or less	No knowledge
1–5	Basic knowledge
6–10	Average knowledge
11–15	Extensive knowledge
16–20	Erudition or exceptional mastery
21 or more	Genius

Note: an Exclusive Skill (X) can only have a Global Level if this Skill has been trained.

CHARACTER CREATION

"The difficult part in breathing life into an artificially designed being is making it understand its role in society. It's not that complicated when it's a machine. Although we've already had some problems in the past! When it's an organic creation, though; what a nightmare! It inevitably thinks of itself as superior to the rest of the human race when it is just a tool at the service of the Board Council!"

—Statement by Vol Ferden,
head of the genetic department at Cortex

CONCEPTS

This preliminary phase of "Concepts" enables the Players to sketch out their Player Characters (PCs) as well as the group they will form. There is no particular order to follow as everything will depend on what the Players want, and on the GM's needs. Thus the group should not hesitate to talk and play with everyone else's ideas in order to find the best balance.

CHARACTER CONCEPT

Each Player can define a base concept for his character. There is no need to be too specific for the time being—a quick definition in two or three words is enough: ex-soldier turned mercenary, young pilot, smuggler with connections to pirates, crafty technician, traveling trader... The rest of character creation, and particularly the prior experience phase, will give all the necessary details. However, it could be useful to define the character's genetic nature now (see below).

GROUP CONCEPT

If each Player is indeed free to create any kind of character, the players may find it useful to invent a 'group concept' for their adventuring team so everyone creates consistent PCs. Ideally, each character's base concept should have a role in the group so that each can be useful and possess abilities and knowledge that are complementary with the others*. Obviously, the Gamemaster may voice her opinion, depending on the scenario she has prepared, unless she lets herself be led by her Players' choices as a guide to building future plots... Here are some examples of group concepts: smugglers, explorers, pirates, adventurers, mercenaries, secret agents, members of an underwater community, soldiers/commandos, outlaws, diplomats, police/investigators, etc. Feel free to come up with your own group concepts!

** Consider carefully how the groups piloting and underwater combat Skills are distributed among the characters, especially if they intend to own or operate a small, shared ship. The underwater combat rules were designed to favor actual teamwork between the pilot, the tactician, the soundscan analysis operator, the weapons officer, and even the mechanic and the crew's medical officer!*

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CHARACTER POWER LEVELS (GM ONLY)

What sort of setting do you wish to establish in your Polaris RPG *sessions*? Are you going to focus on the dark side of this world and the difficult life of the inhabitants who live in troubled waters? In this case, you may want to create a realistic setting in which the characters are no super-humans but just human beings trying to survive in spite of fear, breakdowns, and wounds. Or do you want to go into unbridled action and epic big-budget scenarios? Then you need a more heroic setting in which 'burlier' PCs fear no adversity, danger or the scratches caused by the latest-generation armor-piercing bullets. Or you could opt for an intermediate setting to strike a good balance between thriller and action...

As you will see, character power levels depend upon your play style. For clarity, use these three setting-dependent 'power levels':

- **Realistic setting:** The PCs are normal people whose experience and resources are the result of calculated risks and judicious choices. Their abilities are decent at best, and they must remain cautious and watchful.
- **Intermediate setting (the default):** the PCs' abilities are slightly higher than the average. They are more experienced or better equipped than the average person, which is an advantage, but one to be used wisely, though, as they are safe from danger.
- **Heroic setting:** the PCs' abilities are higher than the average. They are well-equipped and experienced. For the rest, even though they are more resistant than ordinary people, they are nevertheless far from being super-human...

By default, and more particularly if you are new to *The Polaris RPG*, we advise you to create "intermediate" characters who can match the standard setting of this game world. Afterward, depending on your preference and needs, you can try out either of the other options. Needless to say that, the PCs should all be granted the same level of power... Throughout the following character creation rules, you will be presented with various 'profiles,' and you must choose the one that corresponds to the chosen option.

Example (creation of Carian): *Throughout this chapter, we will use the creation of a Player Character, Carian, as an example.*
Concept: Carian's Player would like his character to be quite action-oriented —why not somebody who served in the army before throwing himself into adventures?
Level of power: the GM has chosen the "intermediate" setting.

BUILDING A CHARACTER

CHARACTER CREATION STEPS

Each creation step defines one character aspect.

1. BASE ABILITIES: these are the physical and mental faculties essential to the character, and are represented by his Attributes (Primary and Secondary).

2. GENETIC TYPE: The character may be a normal human, or a "Hybrid" able to move underwater—there are three types of Hybrids: Natural Hybrid, Geno-Hybrid, and Techno-Hybrid.

3. SPECIAL ABILITIES: these are the abilities that really stand out of the ordinary, such as having mutations, and/or being capable of producing a Polaris effect.

4. PRIOR EXPERIENCE: this is the years of experience that the character spent in one or several Professions. This experience has a direct influence on his Skills, but also on his savings, the equipment he can get, and even on his professional Advantages and Disadvantages.

5. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES: Advantages are innate natural abilities, or resources and various bonuses acquired by the character throughout his life. Disadvantages, however, are hindering flaws or additional problems.

FULL CREATION OR QUICK CREATION?

The character creation system presented here is based on gradually Building a Character Using all the 5 steps defined above. Each one of these steps enables a detailed customization of your character, enhanced by many creation options. Creating a character through this comprehensive system does therefore take some time. This is why we also thought of Players who are in a rush... Consequently, the "Archetypes" system allows Players to get through character creation directly without going through the preliminary step of Creation Points (CP) distribution. Additionally, at the end of this chapter you will find two other methods to speed this process up, without going into too many details. Finally, for those who wish to play without waiting, pre-generated characters, ready to be immediately thrown into an adventure, are also included in this book.

CREATION POINTS

At each step of character creation, the Player can spend **Creation Points (CP)** in order to improve and customize various aspects of his character. Each expenditure of CP is thus translated into a bonus to the character (improvement of Attributes, years of experience, various Advantages, etc.). The creation options that are available can be found in the detailed descriptions of the steps as well as both their cost in CP and all the necessary procedures. We propose two methods

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to come up with the amount of CP the Players have at their disposal for each creation step: free distribution (an accurate but long process) or automatic distribution, after choosing a character archetype (the simplest and fastest method).

In any case, whatever the creation method selected, the GM is still free to forbid any choices, especially those that she deems inappropriate to her scenario or her campaign.

METHOD 1: CHOOSING AN ARCHETYPE

This method is recommended for Players who want to directly create their character, as well as for beginner Players. You only need to choose one of the archetypes below, depending on the concept of the character that you want to create. Each archetype offers an automatic distribution of CP; its description clearly indicates the number of points that can be spent at each step of creation.

The Default Character

This is a balanced character with fairly decent Attributes and a prior experience of 12 years, which will grant him some respectable Skills. Although he does not have any significant Advantages, neither is he hindered by any Disadvantages.

- **Base Abilities (8 CP):** 16 additional Attribute points for a total of 54 Attribute points to distribute (see page 102) in an intermediary setting.
- **Genetic Type (0 CP):** normal human.
- **Special Abilities (0 CP):** random mutations only (*CRB2* page 173), no mastery of the Polaris Effect.
- **Prior Experience (12 CP):** 12 years of professional experience.
- **Advantages (0 CP).**
- **Disadvantages (0 CP).**

The Upstart Kid

The upstart kid is a youngster who mainly relies on his natural abilities to get ahead in life:

- **Base Abilities (7 CP)**: 14 additional Attribute points for a total of 52 Attribute points to distribute (see page 102) in an intermediary setting.
- **Genetic Type (0 CP):** normal human.
- **Special Abilities (3 CP):** a few purchased mutations, no mastery of the Polaris Effect.
- **Prior Experience (7 CP):** 7 years of professional experience.
- **Advantages (3 CP).**
- **Disadvantages (0 CP).**

The Young Heir

This character has little experience but possesses ample resources:

- **Base Abilities (5 CP):** 10 additional Attribute points for a total of 48 Attribute points to distribute (see page 102) in an intermediary setting.
- **Genetic Type (0 CP):** normal human.
- **Special Abilities (0 CP):** random mutations only (*CRB2* page 173), no mastery of the Polaris Effect.
- **Prior Experience (5 CP):** 5 years of professional experience.
- **Advantages (10 CP).**
- **Disadvantages (0 CP).**

The Hybrid

This character has a rare mutation or heavy body modifications and transformations that enable him to move underwater without diving armor—this character has no Disadvantages but things are not always what they seem: there are many drawbacks to this condition, and being in the open air unsettles this character:

- **Base Abilities (5 CP):** 10 additional Attribute points for a total of 48 Attribute points to distribute (see page 102) in an intermediary setting.
- **Genetic Type (5 CP):** Natural Hybrid, Geno-Hybrid, or Techno-Hybrid.
- **Special Abilities (0 CP):** random mutations only (*CRB2* page 173), no mastery of the Polaris Effect.
- **Prior Experience (10 CP):** 10 years of professional experience.
- **Advantages (0 CP).**
- **Disadvantages (0 CP).**

The Phenomenon

Gifted with exceptional abilities, the phenomenon might have a mutation or two, or the ability to use the Polaris Effect—please note the presence of Disadvantages, perhaps due to the reactions and problems triggered by his strange abilities:

- **Base Abilities (5 CP):** 10 additional Attribute points for a total of 48 Attribute points to distribute (see page 102) in an intermediary setting.
- **Genetic Type (0 CP):** normal human.
- **Special Abilities (7 CP) :** selected mutations, or mastery of the Polaris Effect with one free power to be selected and two additional powers to be randomly determined.
- **Prior Experience (12 CP):** 12 years of professional experience.
- **Advantages (0 CP).**
- **Disadvantages (+4 CP).**

The Survivor

Relentless, the survivor has experienced many ups and downs but has always been able to weather the storm despite a difficult life—please note the presence of Disadvantages, a reminder of his years of hardships:

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- **Base Abilities (7 CP):** 14 additional Attribute points for a total of 52 Attribute points to distribute (see page 102) in an intermediary setting.
- **Genetic Type (0 CP):** normal human.
- **Special Abilities (3 CP):** a few purchased mutations, no mastery of the Polaris Effect.
- **Prior Experience (12 CP):** 12 years of professional experience.
- **Advantages (3 CP).**
- **Disadvantages (+5 CP).**

The Veteran

The veteran is a guy with average abilities, counterbalanced by significant life experience:

- **Base Abilities (3 CP):** 6 additional Attribute points for a total of 44 Attribute points to distribute (see page 102) in an intermediary setting.
- **Genetic Type (0 CP):** normal human.
- **Special Abilities (0 CP):** random mutations only (*CRB2* page 173), no mastery of the Polaris Effect.
- **Prior Experience (14 CP):** 14 years of professional experience). ***Optional:*** 1 automatic roll on the Setback table (*CRB2* page 186).
- **Advantages (3 CP).**
- **Disadvantages (0 CP).**

The Old Seadog

Experienced, the old seadog has already had a very long life—please note the presence of Disadvantages, perhaps due to old wounds or to various problems that he has been storing up all his life:

- **Base Abilities (4 CP):** 8 additional Attribute points for a total of 46 Attribute points to distribute (see page 102) in an intermediary setting.
- **Genetic Type (0 CP):** normal human.
- **Special Abilities (0 CP):** random mutations only (*CRB2* page 173), no mastery of the Polaris Effect.
- **Prior Experience (17 CP):** 17 years of professional experience. ***Optional:*** 2 automatic rolls on the Setback table (*CRB2* page 186).
- **Advantages (4 CP).**
- **Disadvantages (+5 CP).**

Example (creation of Carian): *for the time being, the Player opts for distributing his 20 CP freely while taking inspiration from the "Survivor" archetype, to which he makes some changes, yielding: Base Abilities (5 CP), Genetic Type (0 CP), Special Abilities (3 CP), Prior Experience (12 CP), Advantages (2 CP), Disadvantages (+2 CP).*

METHOD 2: FREE DISTRIBUTION OF THE CREATION POINTS

At the beginning, each Player possesses **20 Creation Points (CP)** to be spent through each step for improving the various aspects of his character. With the purchase of various options, he will then be able to build and customize his character from A to Z. During their first character creations, the Players should feel free to take inspiration from the archetypes offered above, or even to modify them in order to make them fit their own vision. Giving some Disadvantages to the character can earn him some extra CP, depending on their importance and the limitations they entail. These additional CP can be redistributed elsewhere in any aspects of the character. Taking a Disadvantage may be useful if the Player needs some points to reach a particular bonus. This obviously entails some drawbacks as well, due to the selected Disadvantage.

Since this is a free-form method, the Players and the GM should use their common sense throughout this process so as to come up with consistent characters. It is generally advised not to spend more than 15 to 20 CP in any one single creation step; it is possible to do so, but the Players may well end up with a character with unbalanced abilities. At any rate, some of these steps have their own limitations and do not allow such spending. It's also useful to draw a theoretical limit to the number of Disadvantages that can be given to a character; it might be risky to take more than 7 or 8 Disadvantage points—10 being the absolute maximum. The Player could end up with a character who will essentially be unplayable—for example, a one-armed, one-legged, one-eyed character who suffers from several debilitating mutations, and who is hunted down by all the police services in the world...

1. BASE ABILITIES

BASE ATTRIBUTE VALUES

At the beginning, the Base Score for each Attribute is 7. Then, each Player has a number of points to distribute as he wishes among his character's 8 Attributes, according to the GM's game style (see **Power Level of the Characters**, page 100):

SETTING	ATTRIBUTE POINTS
Realistic	30
Intermediary	38
Heroic	46

You may distribute these additional Attribute points as you see fit while making sure you respect the following conditions:

- At this stage, no Attribute score can be higher than 20.
- Levels 8 to 15 have a normal cost (1 point for 1 level).
- Levels 16 to 18 cost twice as much (for example, 12 points have to be spent to have an Attribute at 17: 8 points to purchase levels 8 to 15, and 4 points to purchase levels 16 and 17).

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• Levels 19 and 20 cost three times as much.

The table below sums up all the costs, per level of Attribute:

TARGET LEVEL	ATTRIBUTE POINT COST
8	1
9	2
10	3
11	4
12	5
13	6
14	7
15	8
16	10
17	12
18	14
19	17
20	20

Note: calculating Secondary Attribute values is unnecessary at this point as the Primary Attributes can still change.

Example (creation of Carian): *Carian is being created according to the "intermediary" character rule. The Player thus receives 38 Attribute points to distribute, giving the character the following scores: Strength: 12, Constitution: 13, Coordination: 12, Adaptation: 12, Perception: 10, Intelligence: 10, Willpower: 14, Presence: 11.*

IMPROVING THE PRIMARY ATTRIBUTE FOR METHOD 2

You can obtain more points to distribute among your character's Primary Attributes by spending CP.

Each CP spent provides 2 additional Attribute points, as shown below:

SPENDING	IMPROVEMENT
1 CP	+2 Attribute Points
2 CP	+4 Attribute Points
3 CP	+6 Attribute Points
4 CP	+8 Attribute Points
5 CP	+10 Attribute Points
6 CP	+12 Attribute Points
7 CP	+14 Attribute Points
8 CP	+16 Attribute Points

The conditions for point distribution do not change (see **Base Attribute Values**, page 102). The levels you obtain shape the character's basic profile. Write it down on the "Base" line found in the Attribute section of the character sheet. Afterwards, some modifiers—due to the character's genetic nature or his age, for instance—can make this starting profile evolve.

Example (creation of Carian): *the Player has allocated 5 CP to Carian's base abilities, which represents 10 additional Attribute points. The character's Strength is raised up to 14 (for 2 Attribute points), his Constitution to 14 (1 point), his Coordination to 14 (2 points), his Perception to 12 (2 points), and his Adaptation to 15 (3 points). The other Attributes do not change (Intelligence: 10, Willpower: 14, Presence: 11).*

BASE LUCK VALUE

Here are the starting scores, depending on the game setting selected by the GM:

SETTING	STARTING LUCK
Realistic	11
Intermediary	13
Heroic	15

BASE SKILL LEVEL

At this stage of the creation, a character does not possess any Mastery Level in his Skills. They do, however, have a Base Level that is— remember —**equal to the sum of the Natural Abilities corresponding to both its associated Attributes** (if there is only one associated Attribute, multiply the corresponding Natural Ability by two).

If one Attribute level increases or decreases, this will obviously impact the Base Level of its associated Skills. They will have to be calculated again and the Base Levels modified as necessary. **Please note that calculating the Base Level of all the Skills together is unnecessary:** you should only calculate when you actually need a Base Level (when improving a Skill, or during game play when it is necessary to perform a Skill Test). You need never calculate the Base Level of the Exclusive Skills (marked "X") that are not developed by your character: no Tests will ever be made with those Skills.

Example (creation of Carian): *for example, let us calculate the Base Level of some of Carian's Skills. With a score of 14 in Strength and Coordination (Natural Ability Level: 2), Carian's Base Level in Athletics is 4. With a score of 14 in Willpower and 11 in Presence (Natural Ability Level: 1), his Base Level in Leadership is only 3. Finally, with a score of 10 in Intelligence, Carian only has a very average level in Computing, the Base Level for this Skill being calculated from Intelligence only (Natural Ability Level: 1) and considered difficult to learn (-3 penalty to its Base Level, which gives 1 + 1 – 3 = -1). In the end, Carian can only rely on a very poor -1 in Computing: if he does not develop this Skill in the future, he will barely be able* to perform the most basic computer tasks.

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A Natural-Hybrid on the run

2. CHARACTER GENETIC TYPE

There are four basic genetic types offered in the *Polaris RPG*: normal human, Techno-Hybrid, Geno-Hybrid, and Natural Hybrid. Hybrids are either mutants or modified human beings who are able to breathe and survive underwater. By default, all the characters are normal humans; this genetic type is free and does not cost any CP. Normal humans follow the usual rules—their Attributes are not modified and they have neither the Advantages nor the Disadvantages of Hybrids. But the Hybrid genetic types do cost CP. Their abilities, and their particular Advantages and Disadvantages are detailed further below. There, you will also find the modifiers to apply immediately to their Attributes. They may go above 20 or fall below 7.

Note: during a campaign, a human character can potentially be transformed into a Geno-Hybrid or Techno-Hybrid.

PLAYING A HYBRID

Hybrid characters have a huge advantage underwater, but they also have a lot of limitations in the open air, and many other Disadvantages. Moreover, there are a large number of rules that are specific to them in order to translate their unique abilities. For all those reasons, the Gamemaster should avoid letting beginner Players play such characters.

Natural Hybrid (5 CP)

A Natural Hybrid (also called Neo-Hybrid) was born with all the mutations necessary to breathe underwater. Among all the Hybrids, Natural Hybrids are the most advantaged underwater, but the most disadvantaged in dry places.

At creation, a Natural Hybrid character must modify his Attributes as follows:

- **Strength +1**
- **Constitution +2**
- **Coordination +2**
- **Adaptation +1**
- **Intelligence -2**

Natural Hybrids have the following Advantages and Disadvantages:

- **SPECIAL *HYBRID* SKILL:** Hybrids (of any type) are the only ones who can use this Special Skill, as it represents not only their connection with the aquatic world, but also mastery of their mutation (or of their modifications for Geno-Hybrids and Techno-Hybrids). **Natural Hybrids start with this skill at a *Mastery* Level of +3 and they can develop it at a normal cost as if it were a Professional Skill.** If he wishes to, a Natural Hybrid can freely use this Skill instead of *Underwater maneuvering* and *Athletics* (when this Skill is used for swimming), provided he can move freely, which means without armor or a suit. He may then focus on developing only one Skill (see also **Evolving Mutation** below). Lastly, the *Hybrid* Skill also represents the character's physiological resistance to pressure. It indicates how deep a character can go underwater. **Thus, a Natural Hybrid can dive up to**

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a maximum depth of 1,000 m + (Global Hybrid Skill Level x 1,000 m). Exception: A Neo-Hybrid cannot dive deeper than 100 m unless he develops his Global Hybrid Skill level to a minimum of 1.

- **EVOLVING MUTATION:** by gradually getting used to the sea environment, the bodies of Natural Hybrids slowly change. The mutants progressively become hairless. They become slimmer while their bone structure becomes suppler. A slight deformation rapidly alters their skulls—they tend to get flatter on both sides. Their fingers become thinner and their limbs tend to lengthen. Their eyes become more and more bulging and colorless. Their sight is altered as well; they can see better in the blue and green spectrums, but become more vulnerable to bright lights. Their skin becomes softer and more fragile, and it scratches very easily. These physical modifications tend to recede once the Hybrid leaves the water. However, the deeper he goes, the more pronounced and clear they will be. It is even said that a Hybrid diving down to 15,000 meters deep does not really look human anymore... However, the further a character progresses in his *Hybrid* Skill, the more pronounced his physical modifications are (above a Mastery Level of +10, the character's nature can hardly be mistaken). All this also has some consequences on the Hybrid's abilities: as time goes by, he tends to be more able to survive in an underwater environment and less at ease in a dry one. So, as soon as he reaches *Mastery* Levels +5, +7, +10, +13, and +15 (not to be confused with *global* level) in his *Hybrid* Skill, he undergoes the following modifiers:

NATURAL-HYBRID

- **RESISTANCE TO PHYSICAL DAMAGE:** +1 stacking modifier in a dry place and -1 underwater—for instance, at a +10 Mastery Level, the Hybrid has his Damage Resistance increased by +3 in a dry environment, which makes him more vulnerable, and decreased by -3 underwater, which conversely gives him an advantage.

- **VISUAL PERCEPTION:** -1 stacking modifier in a dry place and +1 underwater to all Perception Tests in direct relation with the character's sight.

- **AQUATIC ADAPTATION:** Natural Hybrids are perfectly used to aquatic environments and have no trouble moving and maneuvering underwater. Their physical Skills are therefore not limited by the normally limiting Skill *Underwater Maneuvering*. Moreover, they can move underwater much faster than mere humans (see **Movement** in the **Combat** chapter, page 219).

- **IMMUNE TO THE COLD (IN WATER ONLY):** Natural Hybrids do not feel the water temperature. They do not suffer any penalty from the cold if they are in the water. Outside their natural environment, though, they are as vulnerable as anybody else.

- **HEAT SENSITIVE:** in contrast, Natural Hybrids are highly affected by the heat. They dehydrate faster than normal people out of the water and are very sensitive to fire. Damage caused by fire or heat is increased by +3 against Natural Hybrids. If they are in an overheated room, near a heater or any other device or phenomenon generating heat, they will suffer from a -3 penalty to their Fatigue test (*CRB2* 203). Even when resting, they have to perform a Fatigue Test every two hours in such an environment. *Note:* in case the GM does not use the Fatigue advanced rules, consider that Hybrids suffer a -2 general penalty to all their Tests, and add a -1 stacking penalty every two hours spent in this environment—when this penalty reaches -10, the GM can freely ask for a Shock Resistance Test.

- **WATER ENVIRONMENT-DEPENDENT:** after a number of hours equal to his Willpower spent out of the water, a Natural Hybrid has to perform a Willpower test without any modifiers. Then, he has to perform a new Test every hour with a -2 stacking penalty for every extra hour spent out of the water. Moreover, due to the evolving Mutation, this penalty rises to -3 once the character reaches the +7 *Mastery* Level in the *Hybrid* Skill. In the case of a failed Test, he temporarily loses 1 Strength point and all his physical action Tests—Endurance Tests included—are dealt a -1 stacking penalty per failure. If his Strength level is reduced by 50%, he must bathe in a water-base substance by any means necessary. Once he is in water, he recovers his normal abilities in 2d6 minutes. This is why when out of

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the water, many Hybrids are equipped with hydrating suits—in this case, they receive a +10 bonus to their Willpower Tests.

- **CLAUSTROPHOBIA:** Hybrids suffer from claustrophobia as soon as they find themselves in a crowded or very narrow place. This claustrophobia causes a -3 penalty to all their Tests. To them, armor feels like a torture device that forces them to perform a Willpower Test every hour, with a -2 penalty per hour spent within the armor. If this Test fails, they will do everything they can to remove it—depending on the situation, of course; if a Hybrid is at the surface, he will get a grip and will not remove it. In the case of a Catastrophe, the character can even suffer from a panic attack and be paralyzed with fear. In the case of a Success, the Success Modifier is added to the penalty for the next Test (to understand what a Success Modifier is, refer to the paragraph **Success or Failure Margins** in section **Test & Actions**, on page 202). Note: all Hybrids within armor usually suffer a -2 penalty to their Tests, except for their Willpower Tests.

- **TRIDENT MENTAL BLOCK:** a Natural Hybrid will always be reluctant to act against a Priest of the Trident. To perform an action that may harm a Priest of the Trident or the Cult, even indirectly, the Natural Hybrid is forced to successfully roll a Willpower Test, with a -2 penalty. If he confronts a Priest **openly**, he must roll a successful opposition Test against the Cult member's Willpower, still with a -2 penalty. Please note that, thanks to this penalty, a Hybrid can find out whether somebody claiming to be a Priest truly is a cult member, but only if he has to act against him. **The Hybrid can in no way be *preemptively* hostile in order to know whether he is dealing with an impostor.**

- **WANTED:** despite all their advantages, keep in mind that Natural Hybrids are highly prized mutants sought by some factions. They are worth a lot, so they have to be careful who they talk to.

- **UNDERWATER PERCEPTION:** Hybrids have enhanced perception under water. This is a sort of passive sense that enables them to feel movements and to perceive shapes even in total darkness. They can use their Perception Attribute up to a distance of 10 meters x Perception Attribute. The GM can assign a difficulty to the Perception Test depending on the nature of the target, its movement, etc.

Geno-Hybrid (5 CP)

A Geno-Hybrid is a human who was changed by the Cult of the Trident's technology in order to survive in an aquatic environment. He can maneuver underwater without any difficulty and without any alterations to his appearance. **A character who wishes to become a Geno-Hybrid has to have spent at least a year in the Cult of the Trident's Special Intervention Group.** (see **4. Prior Experience** below and **Professions**, page 156). There are some rumors about Geno-Hybrids created by the Black Sun.

Note: the cost in CP for this genetic type does not include the required year of prior experience.

At creation, a Geno-Hybrid character must modify his Attributes as follows:

- **Strength +1**
- **Constitution +1**
- **Coordination +2**
- **Presence -2**

Geno-Hybrids share the following Advantages and Disadvantages with Natural Hybrids in an *identical* way:

- **AQUATIC ADAPTATION:** Geno- Hybrids are perfectly used to aquatic environments and have no trouble moving and maneuvering underwater. Their physical Skills are therefore not limited by the normally limiting Skill *Underwater Maneuvering*. Moreover, they move underwater much faster than mere humans (see **Movement** in the **Combat** chapter, page 219).

- **IMMUNE TO THE COLD (IN WATER ONLY):** Geno-Hybrids do not feel the water temperature. They do not suffer any penalty from the cold if they are in the water. Outside their natural environment, though, they are as vulnerable as anybody else.

- **CLAUSTROPHOBIA:** Hybrids suffer from claustrophobia as soon as they find themselves in a crowded or very narrow place. This claustrophobia causes a -3 penalty to all their Tests. To them, armor feels like a torture device that forces them to perform a Willpower Test every hour, with a -2 penalty per hour spent within the armor. If this Test fails, they will do everything they can to remove it—depending on the situation, of course; if a hybrid is at the surface, he will get a grip and will not remove it. In the case of a Catastrophe, the character can even suffer from a panic attack and be paralyzed with fear. In the case of a Success, the Success Modifier is added to the penalty for the next Test (to understand what a Success Modifier is, refer to the paragraph **Success or Failure Margins** in section **Test & Actions**, on page 202). Note: all Hybrids within armor usually suffer a -2 penalty to their Tests, except for their Willpower Test.

Geno-Hybrids share the other Natural Hybrids traits, *with the following differences*:

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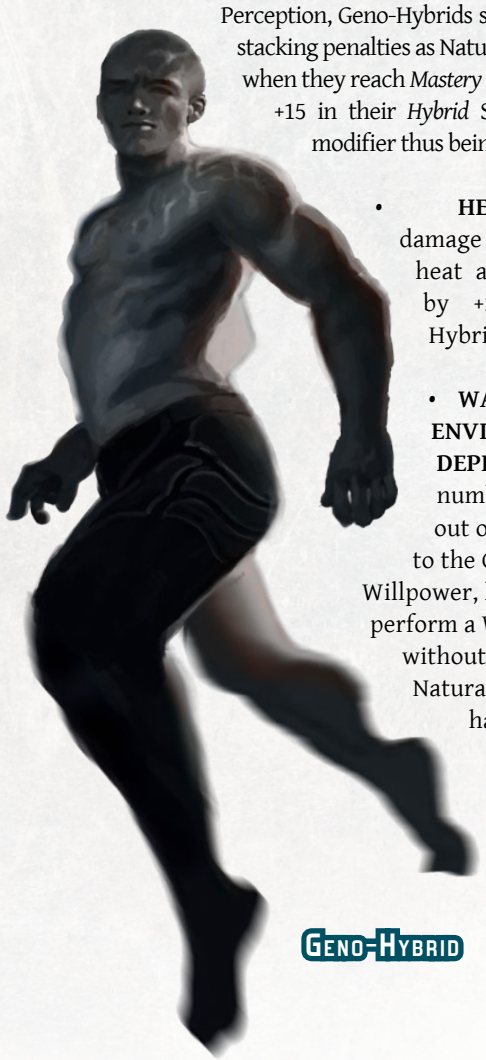
- **SPECIAL *HYBRID* SKILL:** Geno-Hybrids do not have any natural bonuses at the Mastery Level for this Skill—which starts at +0. At character creation, this Skill belongs to the Professional Skills for Trident Hybrids and is therefore subject to the optional Skill Mastery Level rule (see **4. Prior Experience**), unless the GM decides otherwise. If he wishes to, a Geno-Hybrid can freely use this Skill instead of *Underwater maneuvering* provided he can move freely, which means without armor or a suit. So he may focus on developing only one Skill, but he will have to develop the *Athletics* Skill for swimming Tests though. **A Geno-Hybrid can dive up to a maximum depth of 1,500 m + (Global Hybrid Level x 750 m).** Exception: a Geno-Hybrid cannot dive deeper than 100 m unless he develops his Global Hybrid Skill level to a minimum of 1.

- **EVOLVING MUTATION:** Geno-Hybrids are also subject to the evolving mutation, but its effects are much less obvious. The physical changes are more difficult to perceive to an untrained eye, but after some time (+10 Hybrid *Mastery* Level or more), some careful observation may enable others to discover the true nature of the character. Regarding their Resistance to Damage and their Visual Perception, Geno-Hybrids suffer from the same stacking penalties as Natural Hybrids, but only when they reach *Mastery* Levels of +5, +10, and +15 in their *Hybrid* Skill (the maximum modifier thus being +/-3).



- **HEAT SENSITIVE:** damage caused by fire or heat are only increased by +2 against Geno-Hybrids.

- **WATER ENVIRONMENT-DEPENDENT:** after a number of hours spent out of the water equal to the Geno-Hybrid's Willpower, he too has to perform a Willpower Test without any modifier. Like Natural Hybrids, he then has to regularly perform Willpower Tests with a -2 stacking penalty, but only **every two hours**. Moreover, because of the evolving Mutation, this penalty rises to -3 as soon as the character reaches the +10 *Hybrid* Skill *Mastery* Level. In the case of a failed Test, the consequences are the same. Hydrating suits still provide a +10 bonus to Willpower Tests.

- **TRIDENT MENTAL BLOCK:** Geno-Hybrids suffer from the same mental block as Natural Hybrids when they must act against a Priest or the Cult of the Trident. However, the general penalty to the Willpower Test is -7. If he opposes a Priest **openly**, the Geno-Hybrid must roll a successful opposition Test against the Cult member's Willpower, still with a -7 penalty.

- **WANTED:** just like Natural Hybrids, Geno-Hybrids are highly sought by some factions. If they no longer belong to the Cult of the Trident, these Geno-Hybrids are not necessarily fugitives. What really matters to the Trident leaders is that they once were in their hands.
- **UNDERWATER PERCEPTION:** Hybrids have enhanced perception under water. This is a sort of passive sense that enables them to feel movements and to perceive shapes even in total darkness. They can use their Perception Attribute up to a distance of (5 meters x Perception Attribute). The GM can assign a difficulty to the Perception Test depending on the nature of the target, its movement, etc.

Techno-Hybrids (5 CP, 4 CP for deserters)

Techno-Hybrids are characters who had to sacrifice their humanity in order to move freely in the oceans. Their Physical Attributes and, more particularly, their underwater Skills are dramatically higher than those of a normal human, although they have been horribly disfigured by the operations. Called "creatures" or "monsters," Techno-Hybrids are under a lot of suspicion and often need to conceal their appearance in order to live among society. People hardly ever choose to be "enhanced" in this way; they are often the result of the changes imposed by the Hegemony on soldiers and prisoners. A Techno-Hybrid character will therefore usually be somebody who did not have a choice at all...

The requirements to become a Techno-Hybrid are as follows:

- The character has to **be from the Hegemony**.
- They will have spent **at least 2 years** in the Soldier/Militiaman Profession.
- After their change, they then have to spend **at least 1 year** in the Techno-Hybrid Profession.

Note: the cost in CP for this genetic type does not include the cost for the years of prior experience that are required.

At creation, a Techno-Hybrid character's Attributes have to be modified as follows:

- **Strength +2**

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- **Constitution +3**
- **Adaptation -2**
- **Willpower +3**
- **Presence -6** (minimum 3)

Techno-Hybrids share the following Advantages and Disadvantages with Natural Hybrids *identically* (however, they do not suffer from the Trident Mental Block and do not benefit from an Evolving Mutation):

- **IMMUNE AGAINST THE COLD (IN WATER ONLY):** Techno-Hybrids do not feel the water temperature. Therefore, they do not suffer any penalty from the cold if they are in the water. Outside their natural environment, though, they are as vulnerable as anybody else.

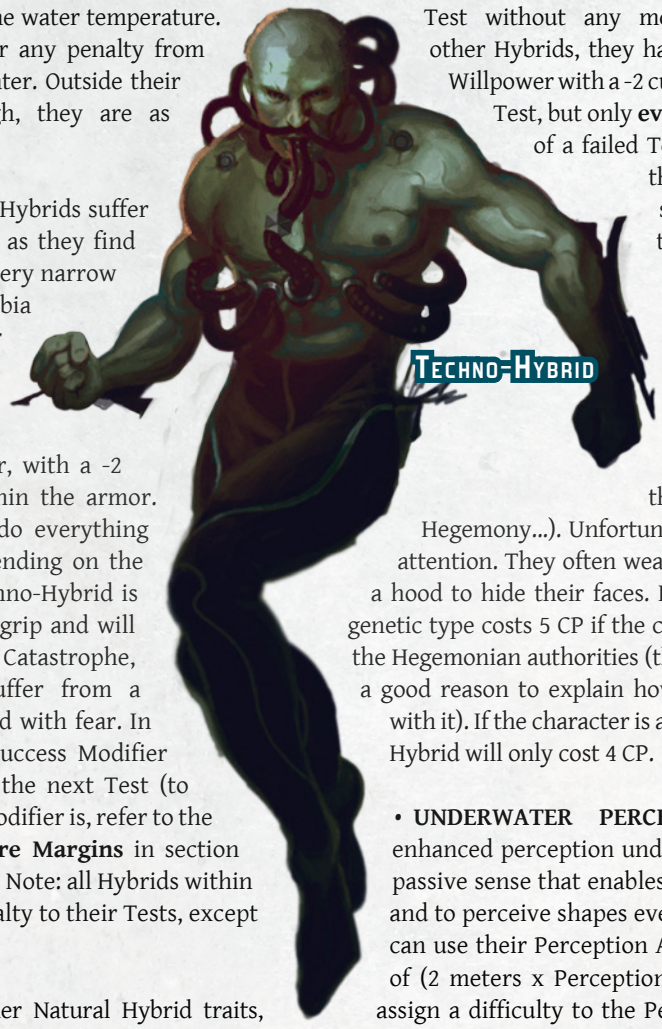
- **CLAUSTROPHOBIA:** Techno-Hybrids suffer from claustrophobia as soon as they find themselves in a crowded or very narrow place. This claustrophobia causes a -3 penalty to all their Tests. To them, armor feels like a torture device that forces them to perform a Willpower Test every hour, with a -2 penalty per hour spent within the armor. If this Test fails, they will do everything they can to remove it—depending on the situation, of course; if a Techno-Hybrid is on the surface, he will get a grip and will not remove it. In the case of a Catastrophe, the character can even suffer from a panic attack and be paralyzed with fear. In the case of a Success, the Success Modifier is added to the penalty for the next Test (to understand what a Success Modifier is, refer to the paragraph **Success or Failure Margins** in section **Test & Actions**, on page 202). Note: all Hybrids within armor usually suffer a -2 penalty to their Tests, except for their Willpower Tests.

Techno-Hybrids share the other Natural Hybrid traits, *with the following differences:*

- **SPECIAL *HYBRID* SKILL:** Techno-Hybrids do not have any natural bonuses at the Mastery Level for this Skill—which, therefore, starts at +0. At character creation, this Skill belongs to the Professional Skills for Hegemonian Techno-Hybrids and is subject to the optional Skill Mastery Level rule (see **4. Prior Experience**), unless the GM decides otherwise. Unlike the two other hybrid types, Techno-Hybrids cannot use this Skill to replace *Underwater Maneuvers* or *Athletics* (for swimming): they need to develop them separately. **A Techno-Hybrid can dive to a maximum depth of 3,000 m + (Hybrid Level x 750 m).** A Techno-Hybrid cannot dive deeper than 100 m unless he develops his Global Hybrid Skill level to a minimum of 1.

- **HEAT SENSITIVE:** damage caused by heat or fire is only increased by +2 against Techno-Hybrids.

- **WATER ENVIRONMENT-DEPENDENT:** after a number of hours spent out of the water equal to the Techno-Hybrid's Willpower, he has to perform a Willpower Test without any modifiers. Then, like any other Hybrids, they have to regularly test their Willpower with a -2 cumulative penalty at every Test, but only **every ten hours**. In the case of a failed Test, the consequences are the same. Hydrating suits still provide a +10 bonus to their Willpower Tests.



- **WANTED:** Techno-Hybrids are often Hegemonian fugitives (the kind of deserters who are usually hunted down by the Prism, the secret services of the Hegemony...). Unfortunately for them, they draw attention. They often wear heavy leather suits with a hood to hide their faces. For all these reasons, this genetic type costs 5 CP if the character is not wanted by the Hegemonian authorities (the Player will have to find a good reason to explain how his character got away with it). If the character is a deserter, being a Techno-Hybrid will only cost 4 CP.

- **UNDERWATER PERCEPTION:** Hybrids have enhanced perception under water. This is a sort of passive sense that enables them to feel movements and to perceive shapes even in total darkness. They can use their Perception Attribute up to a distance of (2 meters x Perception Attribute). The GM can assign a difficulty to the Perception Test depending on the nature of the target, its movement, etc.

3. SPECIAL ABILITIES

"Mutations are only the result of the experiments performed by nature to adapt humankind to its new environment. Those whom we consider abnormal today are actually the first specimens of a new human species."

— Doctor Lenel, from the Azure Alliance

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The Special Abilities character creation stage serves to determine if a character has mutations or if he can use the Polaris Effect.

MUTATIONS TABLE

In this table you will find all the mutations that are available: There are two ways to give your character mutations:

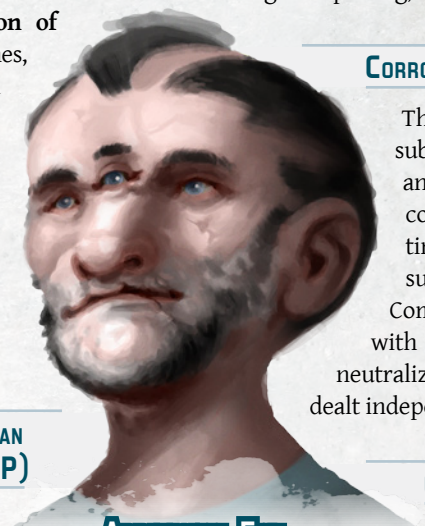
- **Purchase them (cost in CP):** the Player can freely decide his character's mutations; however, they come at a cost. See **Purchasing Mutations** below.
- **Roll on the Mutations Table (free, optional):** A Player has no control over the result and can only hope to obtain a mutation with positive effects. However, he can also end up with a negative mutation added to his character. See **Random Mutations** in (*CRB2* page 173).

Most mutations are actually considered as either Advantages or Disadvantages. Some of them, like Androgynous or Sexless, are "neutral" mutations that provide neither a benefit nor a nuisance.

You can find the Mutations Table on the following page.

PURCHASING MUTATIONS

Each advantageous mutation has a CP cost; a Player who decides to spend CP at this stage of character creation can therefore buy the mutations he wants for his character, **under the strict supervision of the GM.** This cost may be high sometimes, but the choice is yours... Neutral mutations, however, are free. Besides, the Player can also decide to give his character disadvantageous mutations; these Mutations are then considered as Disadvantages, earning a specific amount of CP.



Additional Eye

MUTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Additional or Enhanced Sensory Organ (1-2 CP)

The character was born with an additional sensory organ or with enhanced sensory capabilities. The effects are similar to the inborn Advantage Keen Senses, except that the bonus is +5 (instead of +3). If a character is endowed with both this mutation and the Advantage Keen Senses, both bonuses are cumulative.

Amphibious (2 CP)

The character is gifted with a mutation similar to that of a Natural Hybrid, although it developed imperfectly. He can breathe underwater and can learn how to withstand the effects of the underwater cold and pressure, but he does not gain any of the other advantages Natural Hybrids have (he does not suffer the drawbacks either). Like Hybrids, he can develop the Special Skill *Hybrid* (CON/COO), which starts at level -3. However, the character cannot develop any positive Mastery Levels (therefore, he will only be able to bring this Skill to the +0 level at most). He can only dive up to a maximum depth equal to (*Hybrid* Global Skill level) x 500 m. A character cannot exceed his Constitution as the number of meters he can dive until he has developed his *Hybrid* global Skill level to level 1 (which can happen if his Attributes do not enable him to reach level 1).

Androgynous (-)

Physically speaking, the character takes the form of either gender.

Claws (1 CP)

The character has claws. He can attack with them and inflicts 1D10+3 base damage (plus the Hand-to-Hand Combat Damage modifier). Furthermore, he is granted a +3 bonus on his *Climbing* Tests when using his claws. On the other hand, he suffers from a -3 penalty to Tests involving manual dexterity—e.g. lock picking, stealing a wallet, etc.

Corrosive Touch (2 CP)

The character's skin secretes a corrosive substance that causes 1D10 damage to anybody or anything with which it comes into contact. Damage increases by 3 points each time this mutation is chosen. This corrosive substance keeps on causing damage for 3D6 Combat Rounds as long as it is not cleaned with water or any other substance capable of neutralizing the corrosive agent. The damage is dealt independently from any other offensive actions.

Contagion (3 CP)

The character feeds bacteria that live in symbiosis with him. These diseases are extremely contagious at all times. The character is completely immune to the diseases, and above all, the fact that he is contagious cannot be seen (contrary to Purulence). If the mutation is not controlled, any contact with the person's skin transmits a disease comparable

TEST DIFFICULTY	VIRULENCE
+0	1D6
-3	2D6
-5	3D6
-7	4D6
-10	5D6

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MUTATION TABLE

1D100	MUTATION	ADVANTAGE*	DISADVANTAGE
01-02	Additional or enhanced sensory organ (1D6):		
	1. Enhanced taste buds	Neutral	Neutral
	2. Enhanced smell	1 CP	-
	3. Enhanced touch	1 CP	-
	4. Additional ear	2 CP	-
	5. Additional eye	2 CP	-
	(6. Roll again)		
03-06	Amphibious	2 CP	-
07-09	Androgynous	Neutral	Neutral
10-12	Claws	1 CP	-
13-14	Contagion	3 CP	-
15-16	Corrosive touch	2 CP	-
17-19	Empathy	3 CP	-
20-24	Fangs	1 CP	-
25-28	Genetic animal traits (1D4):		
	1. Feline traits	2 CP	-
	2. Canine traits		
	3. Reptilian traits		
	4. Simian traits		
29-31	Horn	1 CP	-
32-36	Light deformity	-	+1 CP
37-38	Missing sensory organ (1D6):		
	1. Atrophied taste buds	Neutral	Neutral
	2. Atrophied nose	-	+1 CP
	3. Atrophied touch	-	+1 CP
	4. Missing ear	-	+2 CP
	5. Missing eye	-	+3 CP
	(6. Roll again)		
39	Molecular instability	4 CP	-
40-44	Natural resistance (1D6):		
	1. Resistance to fire	1 CP	Neutral
	2. Resistance to cold	1 CP	-
	3. Resistance to drugs	1 CP	-
	4. Resistance to diseases	1 CP	-
	5. Resistance to poisons	1 CP	-
	6. Resistance to radiation	1 CP	-
45-49	Night vision	2 CP	-
50-55	Outdoor adaptation	1 CP	-
56	Parasite(s)	1 CP	-
57	Purulence	-	+ 2 CP
58	Radiation	3 CP	-
59-62	Regeneration	2 CP	-
63	Reinforced skeleton	2CP	-
64-68	Reinforced skin	2 CP	-
69-71	Retractable bone growth	2 CP	-
72-74	Retractable tentacle	2 CP	-
75-77	Self-fertilization	Neutral	Neutral
78-80	Severe deformity	-	+3 CP
81-83	Sexless	Neutral	Neutral
84-86	Shape shifter	4 CP	-
87-91	Sixth sense	1 CP	-
92-94	Sonar	3 CP	-
95-97	Symbiont(s)	3 CP	-
98-00	Tail	1 CP	-

** Only if the mutation is chosen by the Player.*

to the Blue Flu (see **Diseases and Poisons**, in the **States of Health** chapter, page 240). The mutant can try to control his contagion. In that case, it becomes a Special Skill (*Contagion*, CON/WIL, X) **that can be developed at twice the cost**. If his Skill Test is successful, the character can choose whether to infect the person he is touching. A potential victim can develop a disease in 2D6 hours (minus the Success Modifier), the Test Difficulty representing its virulence.

Deformities (light +1CP or severe +3CP)

These deformities can be of any kind. It is up to both the Player and the GM to determine them. Each type of deformity has an effect on the character's Presence Attribute (the penalties are cumulative if the character has several deformities):

- **Light deformity:** Presence -1.
- **Severe deformity:** Presence -2.

Empathy (3 CP)

This mutation opens the Special Skill *Empathy* (WIL/PRE, -3) **that can be developed at twice the cost**. It enables the character to communicate with empathic creatures such as coral (Very Difficult action, -7), and to feel the emotions of animals (Fairly Difficult action, -3). A successful *Empathy* Test is needed to feel people's emotions. An empath can also try to alter a person's emotions. In order to do so, the GM rolls a Willpower Test for the target. The alteration Test Difficulty is the opposite of this Willpower Test's Success/Failure Modifier. The GM can also apply a modifier depending on any possible mind shields or on the nature of the target who is being probed. The number of Combat Rounds during which the target's emotions are altered is indicated by the empath's Success Margin. In the case of a Critical Failure, the targeted character notices that his mind is being intruded upon (even though he may well be unable to figure out the origin of the intrusion). A person's feelings can only be changed step by step. For instance, a character feeling hatred cannot suddenly become ecstatic or feel passionate love. The empath can roll several times against the same person, but he should not be disturbed or he will have

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to start all over again. Altering a person's emotions means that the empath must take on a behavior suggesting this emotion. You can't calm someone down by beating him up! The GM may have to give a penalty depending on how the Player uses his character's empathy. If this mutation is used against an empath, the Test Difficulty is raised by the difference between the two *Empathy* levels. Furthermore, if somebody tries to read or alter his emotions, the targeted empath can roll an *Empathy* Test with a penalty equal to the attacker's Success Modifier in order to notice it. Naturally, if the attacker fails one of his Tests, the probed empath notices immediately. Finally, some empaths can even feel the powerful emotions that permeate a place (Almost Impossible action, -13). Note: this Skill should not be mistaken for the *Empathic Analysis* Skill, which can be developed by anybody.

Fangs (1 CP)

The character has fangs, or his teeth are extremely sharp-edged. During melee combat, after successfully performing a grapple (see **Martial Arts and Special Techniques**, in the **Combat** chapter, page 223), he can bite his opponent and deal 1D10+3 base damage (plus the Melee Damage Modifier).

Fangs

Genetic Animal Traits (Varies)

The character displays a strong genetic animal trait and his look betrays this genetic heritage: altered morphology, skin slightly covered with fur or scales, animal features showing in his face morphology, etc. Roll 1D4

- **1. Feline trait:** The character is more nimble than average (COO +2), does not suffer from vertigo, and gains a +3 bonus on his *Acrobatics/Balance* Tests. Furthermore, the Player can also purchase the Claw and Night Vision advantageous mutations, at 1 CP less.
- **2. Canine trait:** The character is slightly more resistant than normal (CON +1) and is endowed with a very good sense of smell (+3 bonus to his Perception Tests when smell is directly needed). Moreover, the Player can also freely choose Fangs, an advantageous mutation, if he so wishes.
- **3. Reptilian trait:** The character is slightly more supple than normal (COO +1) and he is endowed with a very good sense of smell thanks to his forked tongue (+3 bonus to his Perception Tests when smell is **directly** needed). Besides this, his supple bone structure grants him a +3 bonus to *Evasion* Tests and enables him to sneak in narrow spaces.
- **4. Simian trait:** The character is slightly stronger than normal (STR +1, CON +1), and he gains a +3 bonus to his *Climbing* Tests. Moreover, the Player can also freely choose Tail, an advantageous mutation, if he so wishes.

Horn (1 CP)

The character has a small horn growing on his forehead. During melee combat, he can head butt his opponent and deal 1D10 base damage (plus the Melee Damage Modifier), plus 1D6 additional Shock Damage if the blow lands on the opponent's head.

Missing Sensory Organ (Varies)

The character was born with a missing sensory organ. The effects are similar to the inborn Disadvantage Diminished Senses, except that the penalty is -5 (instead of -3). If a character suffers from both this mutation and the Disadvantage Diminished Senses, both penalties are cumulative.

Molecular Instability (4 CP)

This mutation opens the Special Skill *Molecular Control* (CON/WIL) **that can be developed at twice the cost**. The molecular structure of a person with this power can be altered, occurring when this mutation is intentionally or unintentionally activated. If activated intentionally through a Skill Test, the character can transform into a shapeless magma (with a mass equal to his original body), which he can keep from separating. Keep track of the Success Modifier thus obtained. Each transformation takes 2D10 Combat Rounds. The character can thus move (very slowly), slip under doors, and be aware of his environment, but only through the sense of touch. Nevertheless, he can try to keep a limited form of control of his shape and create certain organs with a new *Molecular Control* Test, with the following Difficulties:

- **Auditory organ:** -3
- **Visual organ:** -5
- **Tentacle:** -7 (this organ, which has Strength 3, can only handle light objects and cannot be used in combat).
- Underwater, a character in his magma form does not suffer from the effects of pressure and can move like an amoeba. To go back to his original form, the PC needs to roll another successful Test. However, the more he waits, the more difficult it will be.
- **Up to 10 minutes:** -3.
- **Up to 1 hour:** -7.
- **Per additional hour:** -1.

However, the Success Modifier obtained during the transformation Test enables the Player to reduce the penalties. Each time a character fails his Test to go back to

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his original form, the difficulty increases by 1 point. If he cannot succeed, he then loses his substance. His Strength or his Constitution (at the Player's choice) is permanently reduced by 1 point. But he can try to go back to his original form again, as if he had waited less than 10 minutes.

In cases of serious stress, the character risks an unintentional transformation (if he is dealt a serious wound, if he is scared, if he drowns, etc.) and he has to roll a successful *Molecular Control* Test. If he fails, he loses his molecular consistency and his transformation begins.

Natural Resistance (1 CP)

The character is particularly resistant to one of the following elements:

- **Resistance to Fire:** Each time the character obtains this mutation, Physical Damage caused by fire is decreased by 3. He has a better resistance to heat (ambient heat is decreased by 1 level.)
- **Resistance to Cold:** Each time the character obtains this mutation, Physical Damage caused by cold is decreased by 3. Ambient cold is decreased by one level—e.g. from Very Cold to Cold.
- **Resistance to Drugs:** The character's resistance to drugs is increased by 3 points. He receives 1 additional point each time he develops this mutation again.
- **Resistance to Diseases:** The character's resistance to diseases is increased by 3 points. He receives 1 additional point each time he develops this mutation again.
- **Resistance to Poisons:** The character's resistance to poisons is increased by 3 points. He receives 1 additional point each time he develops this mutation again.
- **Resistance to Radiation:** The character's resistance to radiation is increased by 3 points. He receives 1 additional point each time he develops this mutation again.

Night Vision (2 CP)

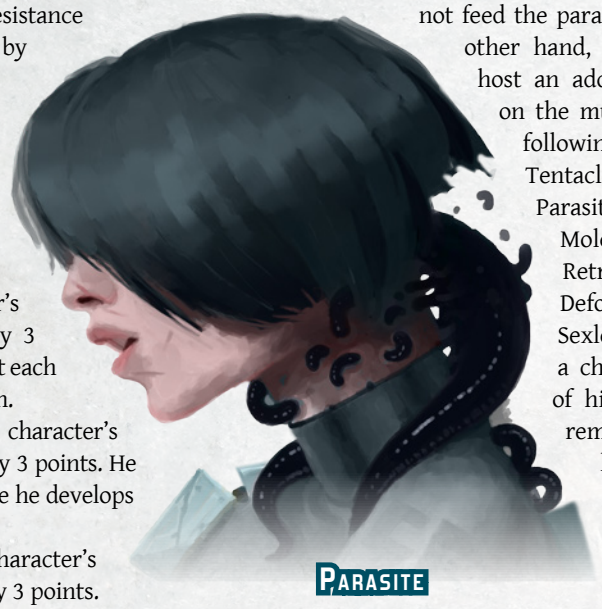
The character can see perfectly well at night, as long as there is a light source, however weak. He cannot see anything in pitch-black darkness.

Outdoor Adaptation (1 CP)

The character is resistant to the surface's nefarious effects (radiation, air acidity, molecular alteration...). He can develop the Special Skill *Outdoor Adaptation* (CON/CON, -3) that can only be developed naturally but without the limitation of +5. The Skill level indicates the number of hours a character can spend on the surface without suffering from any side effects. After this time span, he will still have to be protected, like anybody else. He must then stay away from the surface's effects for a period equal to three times the amount of time he spent outdoors without any protection. After that, he will be able to go out into the open air again.

Parasite (1 CP)

The character is host to 1D4 parasites. He needs to drink and eat twice as much as a normal person. Moreover, the parasites feed from his organism, diminishing his Physical Damage resistance by 1 point for every two parasites. In addition, once a week (or once an adventure, at the GM's discretion), the character suffers an attack that inflicts 1D10 + (number of parasites) Physical Damage (this attack also occurs when the character does not feed the parasites sufficiently). On the other hand, each parasite grants its host an additional mutation to roll on the mutation table (ignore the following mutations: Retractable Tentacle, Symbiont, Tail, Parasite, Missing Sensory Organ, Molecular Instability, Claws, Retractable Bone Growth, Deformities, Fangs, Horn, Sexless, and Androgynous). If a character wants to get rid of his parasites (or they are removed), he permanently loses 1 Constitution point for every two parasites that are removed. At the GM's discretion, a parasite can also have other characteristics.


Parasite

Note: a character cannot accumulate more than two mutations from this list: Parasite, Symbiont, and Regeneration.

Purulence (2 CP)

The character's skin is covered with pustules. He is constantly eaten away by diseases and the parasites he feeds. People with such a mutation are nearly always covered from head to toe. The character's Presence decreases by 2 points (minimum 3) and all his social interaction Tests aimed at charming, convincing, etc., suffer a -5 penalty if his appearance can be seen. However, his Resistance to Diseases Attribute increases by 3 points. If the character develops the mutation Purulence again, his Presence decreases by 1 point and his Resistance to diseases increases by 2 points. The character is only contagious during certain

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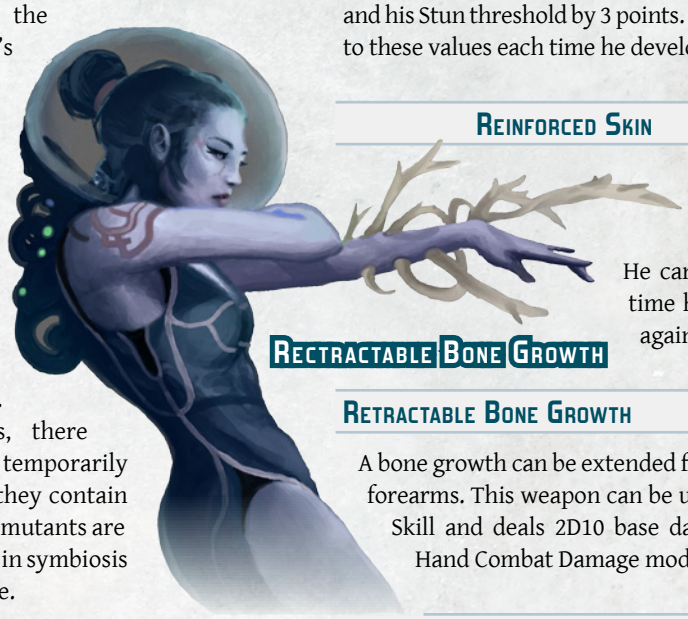
periods of the year (usually one week every three months). The diseases he can transmit are comparable to the Blue Flu (see **Diseases and Poisons**, in the **States of Health** chapter, page 240). The character can try to control his Purulence in order to curb his contamination periods. **In this case, Purulence becomes a Skill (*Purulence*, CON/WIL, X) that can be developed at a normal cost.** During each contamination period, the PC can try to contain his diseases by rolling a Skill Test once a day. However, he suffers a cumulative -1 penalty per day until he has been contagious for a full week. Purulence can also be developed as a weapon. The target and the mutant's skin must touch. Then, the mutant rolls a *Purulence* Test in opposition with the target's Constitution. If the Test is a success, the victim's skin is gnawed by diseases at uncanny speed and he suffers 2D10 (plus the Success Modifier) Physical Damage. If he survives, he is still at risk of catching the Blue Flu (see **Diseases and Poisons**, in the **States of Health** chapter, page 240). If he dies, his body remains dangerously contagious. According to some rumors, there are certain products that temporarily neutralize this mutation, but they contain very powerful drugs. Purulent mutants are also said to be capable of living in symbiosis with parasites from the surface.



Radiation (3 CP)

This mutation opens the Special Skill *Radiations* (CON/WIL, -3) **that can be developed at twice the cost**, and that enables the character to release a flow of radiation into a victim's body through simple physical contact. The radiation's intensity inflicts 2D6 (plus Success Modifier) irradiation points. Each time the character chooses this mutation, the intensity rises by 3 points. Finally, the character receives the mutation Resistance to Radiations for free.

Regeneration (2 CP)

The character regenerates his wounds more rapidly. This in no way keeps him safe from the side effects of wounds, nor does this mutation enable him to grow back a destroyed limb or organ. The effects of this mutation are as follows:

- +2 bonus to Wound Stabilization Tests (for the healer).
- +3 bonus to Tests against infections.
- Healing time divided by two.

If the character obtains this mutation again, the bonuses increase by +1 and the healing time is divided by three. However, a mutant capable of regenerating must eat and drink twice as much as a normal person or he will suffer 1D10+3 Physical Damage at the end of the day, as his body rapidly degenerates.

Note: a character cannot accumulate more than two mutations from this list: Parasite, Symbiont, and Regeneration.

Reinforced Skeleton (2 CP)

The character's Damage Resistance is increased by 2 points, and his Stun threshold by 3 points. The character adds 1 point to these values each time he develops this mutation again.

Reinforced Skin (2 CP)

The character's dark, rough skin grants him a 3-point natural armor. He can add 2 extra points each time he develops this mutation again.

Retractable Bone Growth (2 CP)

A bone growth can be extended from one of the character's forearms. This weapon can be used with the *Melee Combat* Skill and deals 2D10 base damage (plus the Hand-to-Hand Combat Damage modifier).

Retractable Tentacle (1 CP)

A tentacle can be extended from the character's body, and he can use it as a new limb.

Self-Fertilization (Neutral)

This type of character does not have any reproductive organs. However, they can fertilize themselves and give birth to a child.

Sexless (Neutral)

The character is born without any genitals. The character is, therefore, infertile.

Shape-Shifter (4 CP)

This mutation opens the Special Skill *Metamorphosis* (CON/WIL, -3) **that can be developed at twice the cost**. It enables the character to take somebody else's physical appearance (and physical appearance only). If the shape-shifter wants to push his Skill further and mimic the

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imitated person's behavior (gait, body language, voice, etc.), he must roll a *Disguise/Imitation* Test (he still receives the Success Modifier from his *Metamorphosis* Test though). ***Note:*** the character can in no way take any shape other than a humanoid's. Furthermore, his Attributes and Skills remain unchanged—he cannot take those of the imitated character the way a Proteus would, for instance. The shape-shifter can retain his altered look for (Test Success Modifier) hours. The Difficulty for noticing the deceit is equal to half the character's level in his *Metamorphosis* Skill (rounded down) plus his Success Modifier, plus the Success Modifier of a potential *Disguise/Imitation* Test. The GM must roll a Perception test for the character capable of noticing the deceit. This Test can receive a bonus depending on the shape-shifter's behavior and it can be rolled with varying frequency (if his actions contrast with how the imitated character usually behaves).

Sixth Sense (1 CP)

If the character is Surprised, he receives a +3 bonus to his Reaction Tests (see the **Combat** chapter, page 214).

Sonar (3 CP)

The character is gifted with a type of sonar that enables him to detect obstacles underwater or in the dark. This mutation opens the Special Skill *Sonar* (PER/PER) that can be developed at a normal cost. The sonar's range in passive mode is equal to the Sonar Skill level x 10 meters. In active mode, the sonar gives more specific information about the contact at a range of Intelligence in meters for each level of the Sonar Skill, but the character may be detected.

Coupled with a natural skill (such as the skill of the Hybrids), the mutation increases the character's Perception with its level for passive detection (the base range of the natural skill will then be used).

This Skill also enables the character to release a sonic wave that can be used as a weapon both underwater and in the open air. To do this, a successful *Sonar* Test, is necessary, with the same modifiers as those usually applied to ranged combat. If used to find their bearings, this power is no more detectable than a dolphin or a bat's echolocation.

If used to attack underwater, this power is automatically detected over a range of several hundreds of meters as an extremely powerful active sonar. If used to attack in the open air, it creates a sonic boom that can be heard several dozens of meters away. However, the effects of the attack are concentrated on one target only, and the character has to wait 20 rounds minus his Skill Mastery Level between two potential attacks. The Damage inflicted is 1D6+ Shock Damage: +2D6 underwater and +1D6 in the open air. The target must make a Shock Resistance Test with an added penalty equal to the Success Modifier obtained by the attacker.

Symbiont (3 CP)

The character hosts 1D4 symbionts. He needs to eat and drink twice as much as a normal person. If he does not, the character suffers an attack that inflicts 1D10 + (number of symbionts) Physical Damage at the end of the day. However, each symbiont grants him any of the following:

- **Either a +2 bonus** in one Natural Resistance
- **Or an additional mutation**; roll on the Mutations Table (ignore the following mutations: Retractable Tentacle, Symbiont, Tail, Parasite, Missing Sensory Organ, Molecular Instability, Claws, Retractable Bone Growth, Deformities, Fangs, Horn, Sexless, and Androgynous).

If a character wants to get rid of his symbionts (or if they are removed), he permanently loses 1 Constitution point for every two symbionts that are removed. At the GM's discretion, a symbiont can also have other characteristics.

Note: a character cannot accumulate more than two mutations from this list: Parasite, Symbiont, and Regeneration.

Tail (1 CP)

The character has a tail. A character can learn how to handle objects with his tail, and even to attack with it or to use it as a normal limb. He can thus develop the *Tail Agility* Skill (COO/COO) at a normal cost. This Skill enables him to handle objects with his tail and represents a Limiting Skill for the following Skills:

- *Acrobatics/Balance:* can perform acrobatic maneuvers with his tail.
- *Handguns:* enables him to use small handguns.
- *Armed Combat:* enables him to fight with small bladed weapons (the Hand-to-Hand Combat Damage Modifier does not apply).
- *Hand-to-Hand Combat:* enables him to attack with his tail (1D10/2 Base Damage plus Hand-to-Hand Combat Damage Modifier).

POLARIS EFFECT

If a Player wants his character to be capable of using the Polaris Effect, he has to purchase the Polaris Advantage for 5 CP, and only with the GM's approval. He then has access to the Special Skill *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* (WIL/WIL, X), as well as a free power (starting at level X) to be chosen on the Accidental Power Release Table (see the **Polaris Effect** chapter, page 248). He can also purchase other powers (3 maximum) at 1 CP each. These additional powers are randomly determined as follows (these are powers that the character discovers by chance, while experimenting):

- **First power:** the power is rolled on the Accidental Power Release Table (see the **Polaris Effect** chapter).
- **Second power:** the Player rolls twice on the Accidental Power Release Table and choses either result.
- **Third power:** the same as above, but the Player rolls three times instead.

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Warning: *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* and power-related Skills are considered non-Professional Skills (except for the priests of the Cult of the Trident, who, for that matter, can also gain other powers). Their development is at twice the cost, as usual.

The Player must justify how his character managed to acquire these capacities with a plausible explanation (especially if he is not a member of the Cult of the Trident).

Example (creation of Carian): *Carian's Player will allocate 3 CP to his special abilities and decides to give a mutation to his character. He then purchases Reinforced Skeleton for 3 CP.*

4. PRIOR EXPERIENCE

In underwater nations, children are considered to have reached adulthood at 18 years old (except pirates) and their apprenticeship starts immediately. They may choose a profession at 17 years old, the minimum age for a PC.

STARTING AGE

Your character's starting age at creation is equal to **17 years old, or 14+1D4 years old, at the Player's discretion.** This starting age can be modified depending on:

- The character's education or initial training (if you apply the optional rule **Origins, Education, and Training**, presented on the following page).
- His professional experience.

GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGINS

***Note*:** if you do not wish to go into this much detail, or or if you do not have a lot of time, you *may simplify this* step, as well as the three that follow (**Social origins**, **Initial Training,** and **Higher Education**). For further information, see **Simplifying Character Creation**, at the end of this chapter, page 122.

Select one of the geographical origins below or roll 1D10. Apply all the indicated bonuses to the Skill Mastery Level associated with each origin:

1 **NOMADIC SHIP:** Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) +1, Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) +1, Mechanics (exo-armors or Ships) +1, Piloting (Light ships) +1, Piloting (Underwater scooters) +2, Underwater maneuvering +1.

2–7 **SMALL STATION:** Aquaculture/Breeding or Mechanics +2, Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) +1, Electronics +1, Piloting (Underwater scooters) +2, Underwater maneuvering +1.

8–9 **MIDDLE-SIZED STATION:** Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) +1, Bureaucracy +1, Electronics +1, Knowledge of a nation/organization (The station's state or the nearest state if the station is independent) +2, Piloting (Underwater scooters) +1, Underwater maneuvering +1.

10 **MAJOR CITY:** Bureaucracy +2, Education/General knowledge +2, Knowledge of a nation/organization (the city's state) +3.

SOCIAL ORIGINS

Select one of the origins below, depending on your character's **geographical origin**, or roll 1D10 (roll again if the result is not applicable). Apply all the indicated bonuses to the Mastery Level for the following Skills:

1–2 **SLUMS (MIDDLE-SIZED STATIONS OR MAJOR CITIES):** Armed combat +1, Hand-to-hand combat +1, Intimidation or Camouflage/concealment +1, Pickpocket +2.

3–7 **WORKING CLASS (ANY ORIGIN):** Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) +1, Education/General knowledge +1, Hand-to-hand combat +1, Aquaculture/Breeding +2 or Mechanics (choose between: exo-armors, Generators/ Life support systems, Industrial machinery, or Ships) +2.

8–9 **MIDDLE CLASS (MIDDLE-SIZED STATIONS OR MAJOR CITIES):** Bureaucracy +1, Education/General knowledge +2, Knowledge of a nation/organization (the city's governing state) +2.

10 **UPPER CLASS (MAJOR CITIES):** Bureaucracy +2 or Knowledge of a nation/organization (the city's governing state) +2, Education/General knowledge +3.

INITIAL TRAINING

Select one of the origins below, depending on your character's social origin, or roll 1D10 (roll again if the result is not applicable). Apply all the indicated bonuses to the Mastery Level for the following Skills:

1 **DELINQUENCY/CRIME (ANY ORIGIN):** Armed combat +1, Handguns+1, Business/Trafficking (choose between: Weapons or Drugs) +1, Camouflage/Concealment +1, Hand-to-hand combat +1, Intimidation +1, Knowledge of a nation/organization (choose between: Organized crime, Smugglers, Pirates...) +2, Pickpocket +1, Security systems +1.

2–7 **TECHNICAL APPRENTICESHIP (SLUMS, WORKING CLASS, MIDDLE CLASS)**, choose a specialty:

- **AQUACULTURE:** Aquaculture/Breeding +2, Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) +1, Education/General knowledge +1, Hunting/Tracking +1, Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) +1, Piloting (choose between: Light ships, Ground vehicles, Underwater scooters) +1, Soundscan analysis +1, Underwater maneuvering +2.
- **MINES:** Armor maneuvering (choose between: Underwater exo-armors, External exo-armors) +2, Explosives +1, Heavy weapons (melee) +2, Knowledge of an environment (Underground) +2, Mechanics

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(Vehicles) +1, Piloting (Underground vehicles) +1, Survival +1.

- **WORKS/WORKSHOP:** Armor maneuvering (choose between: Underwater exo-armors, External exo-armors) +1, Bureaucracy +1, Education/General knowledge +1, Electronics +1, Mechanics (Generators/Life support systems, +1 additional Skill of the Player's choice, (except Fighters)) +2/+2, Piloting (2 Skills to select from: Light ships, Ground vehicles, Underwater scooters) +1/+1.

8–9 EDUCATION (MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASSES): Computing +1, Education/General knowledge +4, Knowledge of a nation/organization (select any country that is not the country of origin) +2, Languages (choose from common, modern languages only) +1, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (player's choice) +2.

10 SELF-TAUGHT (ANY ORIGIN): Distribute 8 points among the Skills of your choice, while respecting the following conditions:

- **Maximum Skill increase:** +2
- Each increase must be justified, realistic, and coherent (how did the character acquire such knowledge?).
- Increasing reserved Skills requires the GM's approval.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education is only open to characters who received the ***Education*** Skill (see above). Actually, this does not cover the entire curriculum necessary to become a full-fledged scientist, doctor, engineer, officer, etc. It only covers the first years, which in fact represent the theoretical basics (in our world, it would more or less correspond to the last years of high school or a freshman year at college). In order to finish his training, a character will have to spend a few years in the appropriate Profession (see **Profession(s)** below).

Each type of education costs 1 CP and adds two years to the character's age. However, the global cost for the Skill levels is cheaper than years of regular professional experience (see **Profession(s)** below). Furthermore, such training can also open some reserved Skills. **Finally, pursuing Higher Education studies is mandatory to have access to some Professions.** Like with the previous steps, the bonuses apply to the Mastery Level of the Skills.

BUSINESS/MANAGEMENT

Bureaucracy +3, Business/Trafficking (except illegal goods) +2, Education/General knowledge +3, Finding information +1, Knowledge of a nation/organization (select any country that is not the country of origin) +1, Languages (choose) +3, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (choose between: Administration/Management or Economics) +2.

LAW

Bureaucracy +3, Eloquence/Persuasion +1, Education/General knowledge +3, Finding information +1, Knowledge of a nation/organization (select any country that is not the country of origin) +2, Languages (choose) +2, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (Law) +3.

ENGINEERING SCHOOL

Computing +2, Education/General knowledge +3, Electronics +2, Finding information +1, Knowledge of a nation/organization (select any country that is not the country of origin) +1, Languages (choose) +1, Mechanics (choose) +2, Technical Engineering (choose 1 Skill) +3.

MILITARY SCHOOL

Handguns or Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles +2, Education/General knowledge +3, Knowledge of a nation/organization (select any country that is not the country of origin) +2, Languages (choose, preferably from an allied country rather than a hostile one) +2, Leadership +3, Strategy +1, Tactics (choose) +2.

NAVAL SCHOOL

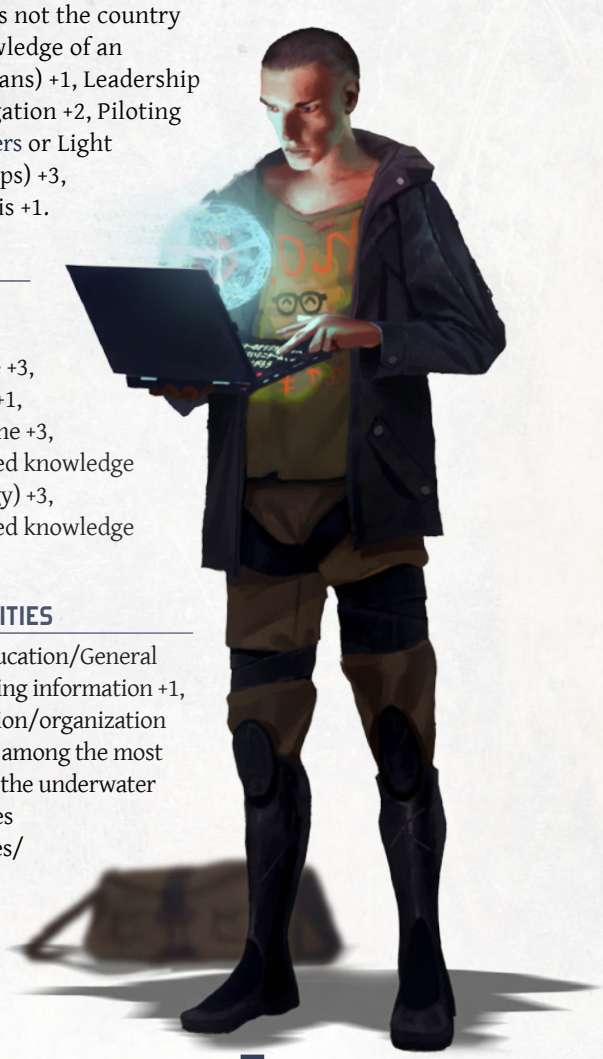
Cartography +2, Education/General knowledge +3, Knowledge of a nation/organization (select any country that is not the country of origin) +2, Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) +1, Leadership or Tactic +1, Navigation +2, Piloting (Underwater fighters or Light ships or Heavy ships) +3, Soundscan Analysis +1.

MEDICINE

Bureaucracy +1, Education/General knowledge +3, Empathic analysis +1, First aid +3, Medicine +3, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (Biology/Physiology) +3, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (Pharmacology) +1.

SCIENCES/HUMANITIES

Computing +2, Education/General knowledge +3, Finding information +1, Knowledge of a nation/organization (select any country among the most important states in the underwater world) +1, Languages (choose) +2, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (choose 2 Skills among Sciences or Humanities) +3/+3.



TECHNICIAN

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POLITICAL SCIENCE

Bureaucracy +1, Education/General knowledge +3, Knowledge of a nation/organization (select two countries that are not the country of origin) +3/+2, Languages (choose) +2, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (Geography) +1, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (History or Law) +1, Sciences/Specialized knowledge (Political Sciences) +2.

PROFESSION(S)

You can assign the character the years of prior experience that will constitute his background career before the beginning of the scenario or the campaign. **Each year of experience costs 1 CP** and gives access to the various Advantages of the Professions. Obviously, **the character ages by one year** for each year spent in a Profession. You will find a description for all the Professions open to the characters in their own chapter, page 156.

For each year spent in a Profession, the character obtains:

- **10 Skill points to distribute among Professional Skills** (see **Improving the Skills** below). If more than one skill "specialty" is provided for a skill under the Profession, each specialty has to be improved separately. Example: Piloting (Light ships, Underwater scooters) for Bounty Hunters.
- **Automatic Advantages and Disadvantages** (Contacts, Allies/Suppliers, Adversaries or Enemies, Fame).
- **5 points to distribute in the Professional Advantages.** ***Optional:*** The character can also be given 5 additional Professional Advantages points by rolling on the **Setback** table (see **Setbacks** in *CRB2* page 190). ***See*** also the random Professional Advantages optional rule (*CRB2* page 177).
- **An increase in his Savings (depending on his years of experience).** This amount of money will most importantly enable him to purchase the equipment to which he is entitled.

From his very first year of prior experience on, a Player can choose for himself any Profession for his character. Likewise, he can decide to stop his character's advancement in a specific Profession at any time in order to choose another. Even though this gives him access to a wider range of Skills and enables him to add up some Advantages, he loses the benefits of years spent in the same job. In effect, the character starts again at year one in a new Profession. Be careful though, as certain Professions do have some **prerequisites** (such as a minimum level in one or several Attributes, a type of Higher Education, a number of years spent in another Profession...). Lastly, a character may have to change workplaces (either deliberately or by obligation) and in this case he will lose all the benefits of the years spent working at the same place. In any case, the Players and the GM will have to ensure that the character's career remains **coherent**, according to his background.

Note: if you do not wish to go into this much detail, or if you do not have a lot of time, you may simplify this step. For more information, see **Simplifying Character Creation** at the end of this chapter, page 122.

Example (creation of Carian): *Carian's Player selects the geographical origin Middle-sized station, and the social origin Middle class. That gives him access to the initial training Education. Thanks to the 12 CP invested in Prior Experience, Carian can take advantage of 12 years of professional experience. Following his initial concept, the Player decides to distribute those 12 years as follows : 9 years as a Soldier/Militiaman and 3 years as a Bounty Hunter.*

IMPROVING THE SKILLS

For each year spent in a Profession, the character earns **10 Skill points** to distribute among the Mastery Levels of his Skills. Levels of Professional Skills, listed under the description for each Profession, can be purchased at a normal cost, as shown in the table below:

TARGETED MASTERY LEVEL	COST PER LEVEL
-3 * to +0	1
+1 to +5	1
+6 to +10	2
+11	3
+12	5
+13	7
Etc.	+2/level

** Spending 1 point in a Skill marked "X" moves its Base Level to -3.*

Purchasing "non-Professional" Skills (any not mentioned under the description of the Profession) is also possible, **but they cost twice as much**. Keep in mind that *Training*, a specific Advantage, enables a character to purchase additional Skill levels (Professional or non-Professional) at a normal cost.

Note on origin-related Skills: the Skills given by geographical and social origins, as well as those learned by a character in his Initial Training, can always be purchased at a normal cost (we recommend that you "tick" them on your character sheet). However, if they do not belong to the character's Professional Skills (i.e. aren't indicated in the description under any of his Professions), their maximum level is limited to +5.

Note on the special Skills: all the special Skills are usually unavailable to a character, even at twice the cost, unless they are indicated in the description under one of his Professions. The Player can still resort to the Training Advantage, **but only with the GM's approval.**

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SKILLS WITH PREREQUISITES

Certain Skills, marked with the symbol "†", have some prerequisites in order to be developed, as the character has to acquire all the necessary Skills beforehand. They actually represent abilities and knowledge essential for the targeted Skill. For example, *Medicine* must have been studied in order to learn *Surgery*, or the character must study *Computing* to be able to use *Computer Hacking* techniques. In game terms, the character needs to reach a certain level in one or more required Skills before being able to develop the related Skill. For example, a character needs to have *Medicine* at level 10 in order to learn *Surgery*. You can find all the necessary information in the **Skills** chapter, page 182.

The only purpose of this rule is to give a bit of coherence to the character's Skills.

NATURAL PROGRESSION SKILL

Certain Skills improve naturally with time because the character has to use them on a regular basis. This mainly concerns *Knowledge of a nation/organization* Skills, *Knowledge of an environment* Skills and foreign-language Skills. Therefore, if a character practices his Profession in another nation, he will learn the local language and customs little by little. In game terms, a character naturally earns 1 level per year for the Skills connected to the nation (or organization) in which he works. **Keep in mind that the maximum Mastery Level a character can reach through natural progression is +5.** Beyond that level, Skill points will have to be spent normally.

Note: pay attention to any penalties to the Base Levels of Skills that are considered difficult to learn.

SAVINGS

For each year spent in a Profession, the character can save the sum indicated in the description of that Profession (savings accumulate from year to year). As you can see, this total grows over the course of time; income growth is one of the advantages of time passing in a Profession. A character who changes Profession returns to the bottom of the salary ladder.

Savings are, in fact, an estimation of resources that a character can obtain and what he has put aside over the course of his life. At the end of character creation, the Player may buy himself gear with this money (see **Available Equipment and Gear**, below), or he may save some of it.

Note: to get an estimate of the monthly salary for a Profession, it is sufficient to think of the given annual salary as, in fact, a monthly salary.

AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT AND GEAR

Each character may spend money to acquire gear. This is, by default, standard gear, which includes mechanized exo-armor, small undersea vehicles, and non-offensive equipment (for more information, consult the chapter on **Gear** in *CRB2*, page 218). However, certain Professions benefit from free gear and are granted access to specialized equipment. For very expensive gear, the character can obtain them by borrowing or using them on-site.

Note: a character who leaves a Profession through which he has obtained a small vehicle, armor, or a free weapon, must return that equipment. If he does not do so, he is considered guilty of theft (seen as a fugitive or a deserter, whichever is the case...).

LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT AND MOVING FROM ONE COMMUNITY TO ANOTHER

A character may be forced to leave an area where he works for various reasons (see the optional rule **Setbacks** in *CRB2* page 186) or he may decide to skip town. Loss of employment, or moving from one community to another, means that, for the following year, the character can only obtain half of what he would have earned (new revenue reduced by half, only 5 Skill Points, and 3 Professional Advantage Points).

THE EFFECTS OF AGING

At the moment when the character starts his adventures under the direction of the Player, his actual age is the sum of his starting age (see **Starting Age**, page 114), plus the years spent in his various Professions. However, the undersea universe of the *Polaris RPG* is a difficult world, which puts human capacity to the ultimate test. The effects of age, therefore, have consequences for the a character's Skills. If the actual age of that person corresponds with one of the following categories, apply the modifiers indicated.

- **30–35 years:** -1 level on an Attribute of your choice from Strength, Constitution, or Coordination.
- **36–40 years:** -2 levels on one or more Attributes of your choice from Strength, Constitution, or Coordination.
- **41–45 years:** -3 levels on one or more Attributes of your choice from Strength, Constitution, Coordination, Adaptation, or Perception.
- **45 years or more:** -4 levels on one or more Attributes of your choice from Strength, Constitution, Coordination, Adaptation, or Perception.

5. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

If you wish, you can give Advantages and Disadvantages to your character, chosen from the following lists. Don't forget that it is not a good idea to overload your character with Disadvantages, just as it can be dangerous to spend all his character Creation Points on Advantages... Certain " Unique " Advantages and Disadvantages can only be used once. The others can be used in several instances.

Evlen Riley Kasmer (Order #6797870)

INVENTING YOUR OWN ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Don't hesitate to invent your own Advantages and Disadvantages using those listed here as examples, especially if you want to give unique or original traits to a character. However, during play, pay close attention to the balance of the game when dealing with the costs or rewards in CP on one hand and the beneficial or harmful effects of the trait in question on the other hand.

ADVANTAGES

Additional Ally or Supplier (1 CP)

This Advantage allows you to have an additional Ally (see the chapter on **Professions**, page 156).

Allowance (1-3 CP)

The character receives a monthly allowance in the amount of (1-3 CP)D6 x 500 Sols. This allowance can be justified in various ways but it is most likely the result of an inheritance or an amount paid out regularly by an Ally or a member of his family. When a character is first created, this advantage allows him to gain (1-3 CP) x 2,500 Sols.

Ambidextrous (1 CP, Unique)

The character can use his right hand and his left hand with equal efficacy.

Bilingual (1 CP, Unique)

The character may choose two native languages (they must be common, modern languages). The Player must be able to justify this in his character's backstory.

Concession (1 to 5 CP)

The character possesses a claim for a small territory. He can situate it where he wants. He is free to exploit it or have it exploited at any time. It's up to the GM to determine the actual value of the claim, based on the CP spent.

Contacts (1 CP)

The character benefits from 2 extra Contacts (see the chapter on **Professions**, page 156).

Extra Money (1 CP)

The character receives the equivalent of 10,000 extra Sols in tags or in bartered goods.

False Identity (2 CP)

The character possesses a false identity (Fame 14, see Professional Advantages: False Identities page 178). The Player is free to choose that new identity, with GM approval.

Good Memory (1 CP, Unique)

The character possesses a particularly good memory, which allows him to recall many details: names, overheard conversations, faces, read text, images seen, etc. He will be awarded a bonus on Tests that demand the use of his memory: +3 to recall a previously memorized, precise fact (a date, a face, etc.); +5 to learn something by heart (a text, a series of numbers, a blueprint, etc.).

Good Reflexes (1 CP, Unique)

The character gets a +2 bonus to his Reaction.

Hard-Boiled (1 CP, Unique)

The character more easily resists physical wounds. He gains an advantage of -1 to his Damage Resistance.

Homo Delphinus (1 CP, Unique)

The character gains a bonus of +10 to his Suspend Breathing Attribute.

Improved Natural Resistance (1 CP, Unique)

One of the character's Natural resistances (choose from: poison, illness, radiation, or drugs) is improved by 2 points. This Advantage is Unique but can be taken multiple times, for each of the four Natural resistances.

Keen Senses (1 CP, Unique)

One of the character's senses (choose: sight, touch, taste, smell, or hearing) is particularly developed. He gains a +3 bonus on Tests that make direct, active use of this sense: recognition of an object or person at a distance, long-distance aim (without a scope) with a firearm (aiming at short- and medium-range is not a real application of sight), hear a sound, smell a scent, identify a specific taste, etc. This Advantage is Unique, but it can be taken multiple times, for each of the five senses. Although it's not necessary to explain the usefulness of perfect vision, you will also find that a highly sensitive level of hearing is a significant advantage on Soundscan Analysis Tests...

Nerves of Steel (1 CP, Unique)

The character gains a +3 bonus on Tests that measure his resistance to stress and fear.

Fabien Riley Kleanthi (Order #6797870)

Night Vision (1 CP, Unique)

This Advantage reduces by half the penalties caused by partial darkness.

Relentless (1 CP, Unique)

The character has an improved resistance to Fatigue. This Advantage offers a +3 bonus to characters for Tests that would challenge their resistance to exertion and fatigue.

Optional when using the Fatigue rule (CRB2 page 203): The modifiers on his Fatigue scale become +3/+0/-5, instead of +0/-5/-10. The Shock Test penalties do not change, though.

Resistance to Pain (1 CP, Unique)

The character is particularly resistant to pain. He gains a +2 bonus to his Stun Treshold, as well as a +3 bonus for Constitution or Willpower Tests to resist pain (from a torture session for example...).

Shares (1 to 4 CP)

The character possesses shares in a business or community. Every month, he receives a payment of money or raw materials, equal to 1 000 Sols times the number of CP spent. Additionally, he may benefit from certain advantages if he has connections within the community or business. The amount that he claims can increase or decrease in proportion to the financial fortunes of the business or community. When a character is first created, each point in the Professional Advantages Gear allows him to gain 1,000 Sols+ [(1-4 CP) x 1,000 Sols].

Title (1-3 CP)

The character is endowed with a noble or honorific title in his community of origin. This can be explained by a heroic feat in the past or an important office that he occupied. He may be decorated with honors, born a noble, have won a prize, etc. He starts the game with a minimal Fame of 3 (1 CP), 6 (2 CP) or 9 (3CP) before using his Fame points.

Training (1 CP)

The character has received training or specialized education. He gains 7 Skill points that he can spend on any Skill (even the Exclusive ones) **with GM approval**. The Player must find a credible justification in the character's backstory. Furthermore, the character's age must increase by one year for every two uses of the Training Advantage.

Treasure Map (1 to 5 CP)

The character possesses a map that could lead him to a treasure. It's up to the GM to define exactly what this treasure is, based on the CP spent, or where and how the Player found the map. A 1 CP "treasure" should at least be the object of a small storyline, and a 5 CP treasure would doubtless be the centerpiece of a short campaign...

Example (Carian's creation): *Carian's Player reserved 2 CP to spend on Advantages for his character. He decides to buy Extra Contacts (1 CP), as well as Training (1 CP) to improve some of Carian's Skills.*

DISADVANTAGES

Additional Opponents (+1 CP)

The character has 2 Additional Opponents (see the section on **Professions**, page 156).

Age-Old Enemy (+3 CP)

The character has an Enemy who seeks his downfall. This individual may be a member of his family, a corporate leader, a pirate, the leader of a rival family, etc. It is up to the GM to decide, but it must be someone both relatively powerful and motivated to frequently interfere with the PC's plans.

Allergy (mild: +1CP, severe: +3 CP, fatal: +3 CP)

The character is allergic to a common product (their choice). A light allergy only provokes a minor annoyance (a penalty of -3 on Tests). A severe allergy seriously handicaps the character, forcing them to reduce by half their chances of success on Tests. A fatal allergy may lead to loss of consciousness, and even death if the character remains exposed for too long.

Coward (+1 CP, Unique)

The character is subject to a -3 penalty on Tests that depend on his resistance to stress and fear.

Diminished Sense (+1 or +2 CP, Unique)

One of the character's senses (choose from: sight, touch, taste, smell, or hearing) is significantly diminished. He is subject to a -3 penalty on his Perception Tests in which that sense is specifically used. Be sure not to forget the possible penalty that may arise from poor vision, which logically interferes fairly often, since this sense is by far the most often used among humans (to spot or recognize a person at a distance, to notice a detail in the environment, to take aim with a weapon, etc.). This Disadvantage is Unique, but it can be taken multiple times, for each of the five senses. For smell, touch, or taste, Diminished Sense yields 1 CP. For

Evlen Riley Kiamier (Order #6797870)

sight or hearing, it yields 2 CP. Finally, note that, most of the time, a deficient sense can be improved by a surgical procedure or a cybernetic implant. Still, you've got to have the cash...

Disability (+5 or +7 CP)

The character suffers from a major disability. Examples of 5 CP disabilities: amputated/paralyzed arm, deafness, muteness. Examples of 7 CP disabilities: blindness, amputated/paralyzed leg.

Frail (+1 CP, Unique)

The character is very sensitive to pain. He is subject to a -1 penalty on his Stun threshold, as well as a -2 penalty on Constitution and Willpower Tests to resist pain (from a session of torture, for example).

Low Endurance (+1 CP, Unique)

The character grows tired very quickly, perhaps because of a medical problem or cumbersome obesity. This Disadvantage imposes a -3 penalty on the character for Tests that relate to his resistance to exertion and fatigue. ***Optional when using the Fatigue rule (CRB2* page 203*):*** The modifiers on his Fatigue scale become -5/-10/-15, instead of +0/-5/-10. However, the penalty on Shock Tests does not change.

Mental Disorder (Variable, see below)

The gain in Advantage points depends on the imbalance. It is generally up to the Player to keep track of this Disadvantage and apply its effects during play, but the GM can certainly impose psychotic episodes if she feels that the Disadvantage has not been played enough. Here are several examples:

- **Combat madness (+2 CP):** when in a fight, the character cannot stop or flee until the adversary is defeated.
- **Kleptomania (+1 CP):** the character cannot stop himself from stealing.
- **Megalomania (+2 CP):** the character is particularly arrogant and always wants to put himself forward as the leader. He often considers himself the best in all areas of expertise.
- **Paranoia (+2 CP):** the character sees enemies and conspiracies everywhere.
- **Hallucinations (+2 CP):** the character suffers from hallucinations. These may be connected to his past, to significant events, or to elements of the campaign.
- **Split personality (+2 CP):** the character suffers from a separate second personality. It is up to the GM and the Player to determine what the second personality is and at which moments it surfaces. This can be an excellent theme to develop throughout a campaign.

Natural Weakness (+1 CP, Unique)

The character suffers from a modifier of +2 on one of his Natural resistances (poison, illness, radiation, or drugs). This Disadvantage is Unique, but it can be taken multiple times, for each of the four Natural resistances.

Phobia (Variable)

The character suffers from a serious phobia. This phobia must be related to an element that may be frequently encountered in the undersea world; for example, enclosed spaces (claustrophobia, +3 CP), mutants (including Hybrids, +2 CP), germs (+1 CP), marine creatures (+1 CP), or even the undersea environment (when the character is in armor, or in a small ship, etc., +4 CP). When he is confronted with his phobia, a character has all his chances for success on Tests reduced by half. Moreover, he is nervous and the GM may distort all the information that he provides so that the least little thing is taken out of proportion.

Secret (+2 to +3 CP)

The character has committed a terrible act (a crime, treason, etc.) that haunts him. Sooner or later, he will be forced to confront his past (and this will be the subject of an excellent scenario).

Slow to React (+2 CP, Unique)

The character is subject to a -3 penalty on his Reaction.

Wanted (+1 CP for one Small community, +3 CP for a nation/major faction)

The character is wanted and there is a price on his head. Be wary of bounty hunters and paid snitches! This Disadvantage is automatic (and doesn't return any CP) for the Techno-Hybrid deserters wanted by the Hegemonian military authorities, or fertile individuals, Natural Hybrids, and Geno-Hybrids.

Example (Carian's creation): *he still has 2 CP to choose among the Disadvantages. Now, the Player is very interested in a Secret (+3 CP)- Who knows what he hides: bloodthirsty madness or a deeper intrigue? For the moment, the Player benefits from an extra CP to spend. Since he's enjoying the idea of a character who is always on the lookout, he buys an extra mutation, Sixth Sense (1 CP).*

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FERTILITY

Because of a sterilizing virus, more and more human beings are incapable of reproducing. A fertile character is very highly valued and is at risk of attracting many people's interest. **A Player can freely choose the Fertility Disadvantage for their character, which is worth +3 CP.** If the condition of the PC ever becomes known, the consequences will be the same as those for the Wanted Disadvantage.

Note (Techno-Hybrids): this Disadvantage does not normally concern Techno-Hybrids, who are, by design, all sterile (the Hegemonian laboratories aren't stupid to the point of "sacrificing" a fertile individual). However, if the GM and the Player find a plausible justification, anything is possible...

FINAL DETAILS

RIGHT-HANDED, LEFT-HANDED, OR AMBIDEXTROUS

Roll 2D10 and find the result on the table below. The Ambidextrous Advantage may be chosen if a Player absolutely wants his character to be so, and he does not get the result he wants from this table.

2D10	RESULT
2–16	Right-handed
17–19	Left-handed
20	Ambidextrous

GENDER

A character can be a man or woman, if they haven't suffered a mutation that removes the need for that choice.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Use your Attributes to get an idea of your character's physical traits. Is he strong and well-formed? Does he seem intelligent or charismatic? Does he move gracefully? Does he have any visible mutations that might force people to distrust and reject him? What is his height, his weight?

Note: Techno-Hybrids are heavier than normal humans (and Geno-Hybrids), while Natural Hybrids are lighter.

BACKGROUND

A character's past is very important if you want him to fit in well with the game's universe. The Gamemaster can also use it to write her scenarios and to involve the character more actively in the campaign. A Player needs to come up with a coherent background that includes all of the details he wants, and those he chose during character creation (money, Advantages, family, Connections, etc.). The Gamemaster is free to accept or refuse specific parts of this background. A well-made, realistic background can even allow the character to automatically acquire new Allies or Connections in the course of the adventure, if the Gamemaster judges them to be reasonable and enhancing to the story. Don't forget that the characters are bound, in the long- or short-term, to interact directly with the *Polaris RPG* universe as well as significant characters. Therefore, it is important that they have an intriguing past.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGINS

Determined by the story that the Player and the Gamemaster have developed, it is essential to know where the character was born. Once again, this helps to build an interesting campaign. For instance, a person coming from the Hegemony may be able to obtain more information about that nation than an individual born in a small community. A Player may also invent a community and decide that his character was born or lived there. The possibilities are endless! Moreover, this allows you to determine a character's native language and whether, during creation, he has access to gear that is only found in certain regions of the world.

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

Once the character's Primary Attributes are more or less in place, the Player can figure out his Secondary Attributes. Pay attention to the bonuses or penalties that come from the Advantages and Disadvantages that will have an effect on the Secondary Attributes.

SIMPLIFYING CHARACTER CREATION

The rules of character creation presented in this chapter convey the idea of open construction, through the purchase of numerous different options. All of this allows a very precise management of character creation, but it does require some time, especially for beginner Players. This approach emphasizes involvement in a long-term campaign, notably through the means of Professional Advantages and Disadvantages. If you want to play one-shot scenarios, some of the elements may appear superfluous and the time it takes to create the character a little long. So, here are a few ideas to speed up the creation by ignoring or simplifying certain options.

SIMPLIFIED PRIOR EXPERIENCE

Don't hesitate to spend less time on the longest step in character creation: choosing among various options for prior experience. Here's how to do this :

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- Don't take into account the **Geographic origins**, the **Social origins**, the **Initial training**, and, eventually, the **Higher Education** of the character. Instead, let the Players **freely spend 22 points on Skills** (following the usual rules), to simulate their initial experience, their origins, their studies, etc. Be aware that no Skill can be improved by more than 3 levels of mastery. Even more, WATCH OUT FOR ABUSE! The choice of free Skills has to be coherent with the character's concept, and the Player must be able to reasonably justify the acquisition of an "exotic" Skill. In the prerequisites for Professions, you can also ignore those that mention different Higher Education requirements.
- Ignore **Automatic Advantages or Disadvantages**.
- Ignore **Professional Advantages** (the Players don't have any points to distribute here).
- **Don't waste time having the characters buy equipment**, which starts with their savings. All the same, note that there will eventually be free equipment, since everyone has access to some categories of gear. **In the middle of the game**, if the character has an immediate need of this or that piece of equipment, and if it seems logical that he would have been able to procure it previously (with the approval of the GM, of course), the Player can note the object on his character sheet, and he can subtract the corresponding amount from his character's account.

Of course, in choosing to ignore some of the above elements, you'll get less detailed characters, which may force the GM to improvise certain things.

SIMPLIFYING THE OTHER STAGES OF CREATION

It is also relatively easy to simplify certain other steps of character creation. You can also:

- **Limit the Advantages and Disadvantages:** the Players simply don't spend CP in these two areas.
- **Ban Hybrids**, so you only create normal humans.
- Decide that all the characters are **sterile** and that they have no **mutations** (and no control of the Polaris Effect).

PRE-GEN CHARACTERS

The following pages present the characteristics and the stories of six pre-gen characters who are typical in the *Polaris RPG* universe. If you are really in a hurry to start the adventure, you only have to choose one and copy its characteristics onto your character sheet (**these characters are created with Attributes in an intermediary setting and use some of the rules presented in the Advanced Rules section in *CRB2* page 172**).

ALTERNATE METHOD FOR QUICK CREATION

This method concentrates exclusively on the essential traits for characters—the Attributes and Skills—and skips all the other subtleties. Save this for when you really need quick character creation! Here's how to do it:

- **Attributes:** the character's Attributes start at 7, and the Player spends 50 points, according to the costs given in the paragraph **Improving the Primary Attributes** in section **1. Base Abilities**, page 102.
- **Professions and Skills:** the character will be an "Adventurer," with a career of a dozen years. The Player has 120 points to spend on his Skills, at normal cost (see paragraph **Improving Skills** in section **4. Prior experience**, page 115).
- **Initial savings:** the characters begin the game with 10,000 Sols, in cash or equipment.

BECOME WHO YOU WANT TO BE

Evlen Riley Klevatter (Order #6797870)

NAME: Anya Ilnica

AGE: 31

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Hey, don't touch that! Its place is in a museum!"

Curious, talkative, reckless

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

ARCHAEOLOGIST

BACKGROUND

You know that there are numerous shadowy zones in the history of your undersea world. You have always been fascinated by the secrets of the ancient Azureans and the feared Geneticians, and there are many things to discover. And to those who think you're wasting your time, that historical study is useless and that there's nothing good to dig out of the legends, you reply that the rediscovery of the past may well be the solution to current problems. You're convinced of it. Maybe one day you will have the luck to discover an ancient depot full of Genetician artifacts, and history will honor your valor. Your vocation remains difficult and dangerous, because who knows what may be hidden in the ruins that you must explore?

You were born in Equinox where you studied archaeology and history under the Aesculapii of the Cult of the Trident.

When you finished your studies, you did everything you possibly could to join the field teams, and you have even been trained to use exo-armor while you were taking private lessons to get better acquainted with the surface and the underground world. But time and again you ended up hitting bumps in the road due to your lack of funding and of experience. There's no point denying it, the Cult, just like many other governments and companies, is not willing to simply fund scientific curiosity. It has far darker designs in mind, and you just have to deal with it. Unless, of course, you could find a way to make it work for you. Luckily, you know that there are people who can take you where you want to go. The Cult of the Trident leaves you plenty of freedom and you want to go and find an adventure to discover more about the secrets of this world.

ATTRIBUTES (5 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	10	12	13	13	14	16	14	12
N.A.*	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	1

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	13
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+0	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-1
STUN THRESHOLD	12	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	22

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city, Middle class, Education, Higher education Science Humanities (1 CP)

SAVINGS: 45,900 Sols.

PERSONAL GEAR: Camera, Computer (personal assistant, TN 3/ Gen. 3), Flashlight, Knife, Light pistol, mini spotlight drone (as flashlight).

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 13; Allies or suppliers: 6; Adversaries: 3; Enemy: 1

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Enhanced attribute, performance, Private Cabin *(11m² Equinox)*, **Gear** *(17,000 Sols, used)*, **Database** *(ancient world 9, Geneticians 8)*, **Training** *(Armor Maneuvering (external exo-armor), 1CP)*, **Fame** *(fame level 5/ fame point 2)*

SKILLS (13 CP)

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handgun (4+4) 8

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Eloquence/Persuasion (4+6) 10

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (6+3) 9; Cartography (6+5) 11; Cryptography (6+5) 11; Education/General Culture (6+8) 14; Finding information (6+5) 11; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox) (6+8) 14; Knowledge of a nation (Mediterranean Union) (6+3) 9; Knowledge of an ancient faction (Geneticians) (6+0) 6; Knowledge of an ancient faction (Azure Alliance) (6+0) 6; Knowledge of an organization (Cult of the Trident) (6+5) 11; Navigation (6+0) 6; Science/ Specialized knowledge (History/Archaeology) (6+8) 14, Science/Specialized knowledge (Geography) (6+5) 11

LANGUAGES: Native language (Neo-azurean) (Special) 18; Ancient language (Arkonian) (6+2) 8; Ancient language (Azuran) (6+2) 8; Specific language (Metalan) (6+5) 11

PILOTING: Piloting (Light ships) (6-3) 3, Armor Maneuvering (external exo-armor) (4+6): 10

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (4+4) 8, Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations)(4+4) 8; Knowledge of an environment (surface)(4+1) 5, Knowledge of an environment (underground)(4+2) 6

TECHNIQUES: Computing (6+4) 10 ; Soundscan analysis (5+0) 5.

SPECIAL SKILLS: Meditation (4+4) 8; Mental Shield (4+4) 8

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Siobhan Millepora

AGE: 31

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Hush now... It's nearly over."

Patient, loner, calm

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

ASSASSIN

BACKGROUND

Death is part of life. On your end, in any case, since you earn your "living" by bringing eternal peace to the targets that are designated for you. Whether you do this for money, because you have to, or because you believe in it is of little importance; bringing about death has become your art.

You're never out of work, because there is always a faction or a government ready to pay someone to do its dirty work. No one wants to get their hands dirty, you see. At least, not directly. Sometimes, of course, they ask you to do something truly disgusting. Then, you have a choice: bury what's left of your conscience even deeper or stand by the limits that you set for yourself at the risk of losing clients. And then, there is always the fear of being the subject of vengeance for the ones close to those you have assassinated. Never mind; just a few more contracts, and you can retire somewhere peaceful.

Unless they find you first. There is one thing you have learned over time; things are never calm for long in this smothering world.

You were born in the slums of Azuria in the Coral Republic. You owe your survival to an old man who gave you an education and taught you how to hide. When you found yourself on your own, you made a choice: you would no longer be the hunted but the hunter. But maybe there's a way for you to change the way you live, because, to be honest you're feeling lonely, and you've had enough of only being a tool for unscrupulous people. Why not go off and look for adventure? You know that there are people out there who would welcome you to their group and who would appreciate your talents more fully. To find people like that, there is one place on this planet where you will find many to choose from... Equinox.

ATTRIBUTES (4 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	11	10	14	16	12	14	13	13
N.A.*	1	1	2	3	1	2	2	2

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	14
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-1
STUN THRESHOLD	11	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	21

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city, Slums, Delinquency/crime

SAVINGS: 8,400 Sols.

PERSONAL GEAR: Dagger, Medium pistol with silencer, Intelligent camouflage clothes (penalty -7), Garrote (strangling with a bonus of +2 for tests, see Chokeholds on page 225. If the attack is a success, it automatically inflicts 1d6 Damage Points +1d6/Round up to a maximum of 6D6), visor 360°, sharpshooting rifle Nerid 650 (stolen)

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 15; Allies or suppliers: 4; Adversaries: 9; Enemy: 2

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Wanted *(+3 CP: Coral Republic)*, **Training** *(1 PC, Education/General Culture)*, **Formation** *(Camouflage/Concealment, 1 CP)*, **Training** *(Special Weapons, 1 CP)*, **Forgery** *(false firearm license 10)*, **False identity** *(Fame 10, protected at -5))* , **Hideout/cache** *(Hideout level 12)*, **Gear** *(13,000 Sols, used)*, **Fame** *(fame level 5)*

SKILLS (15 CP, Thief/criminal: 3 years/Assassin: 12 years)

COMBAT (MELEE): Special weapons (Garrote) (3+9) 12; Armed combat (3+5) 8; Hand-to-hand combat (3+5) 8; Martial arts (Defense techniques) (5+5) 10; Martial arts (Offense techniques) (5+0) 5; Martial arts (Wrestling) (5+8) 13.

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Acrobatics/Balance (4+4) 8; Athletics (3+0) 3; Endurance (3+0) 3; Climbing (3+5) 8

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (3+5) 8; Precision shot (3+7) 10; Shoulder-Fired Weapons/Rifles (3+0) 3.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Eloquence/Persuasion (4+6) 10; Empathic analysis (-3+3+10) 10; Intimidation (4+2) 6

KNOWLEDGE: Business/Trafficking (weapons) (4+2) 6; Bureaucracy (4+2) 6; Finding information (4+1) 5; Education/General culture (4+8) 12; Knowledge of a nation (Coral Republic, orig.) (4+5) 9; Knowledge of an organization (Organized crime) (4+2) 6; Science/Specialized knowledge (Knowledge of poisons) (4) X.

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Camouflage/Concealment (4+3) 7; Discretion/Shadowing (4+5) 9; Disguise/Deception (5-3) 2; Pickpocket (5+5) 10; Stealth/Silent movement (4+7) 11.

LANGUAGES: Native language (Neo-azuran) (Special) 18 ; Foreign language (Solean) (4) X.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (3+8) 11, Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations)(5+6) 11

TECHNIQUES: Spying/Surveillance (4+5) 9; Traps (3-3) 0, Electronics (4+1) 5 ; Security systems (4-3) 1

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Unknown

AGE: 27

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Please. . . help me?"

Shy, vindictive, wild

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

BETA PROJECT 453/TH

BACKGROUND

You are a monster...

You have no recollection of your former life, except a few blurred dreams where you remember you used to be a normal human being a long time ago. There is no way to know what they did to you. "They" are the Hegemonian scientists who work in that ultra-secret laboratory from which you eventually escaped. You know you're a "Techno-Hybrid." What you don't understand is why you are so different from your fellows, the other Techno-Hybrids.

"*A new generation based on genetic transformation processes...*" said that scientist right before you broke his neck. Whatever. By deleting your memories, they also deleted your regrets. The numerous physical tests they put you through have taught you to master this new body. Now is the time to rediscover the world. Maybe you'll find a real family, people who will accept you the way you are.

Maybe you'll also find a way to find out who you were. And get your revenge, if you get the opportunity... For the moment, you're hiding out in the slums of Equinox where you're waiting for a chance to help someone out, so that maybe, that someone will help you in return.

ATTRIBUTES (8 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	22	19	17	15	15	7	11	3
N.A.*	5	4	3	2	2	-1	1	-4

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	15
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+6	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-5 (-9)
STUN THRESHOLD	17 (23)	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	27 (33)

** Natural Ability*

GENETIC TYPE: Special Techno-Hybrid Beta 453 (4 CP, deserter)

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Medium-sized station, Middle class, Delinquency/crime

SAVINGS: 9,100 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Big cloak with hood, Hybrid wrist weapon, Knife

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 1; Allies or suppliers: 1; Adversaries: 1; Enemy: 0

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Controlled mutations *(x2)*, **Enhanced attribute** *x2*, **Resistance to pain, Improved natural resistance** *(radiation)*, **Hard–boiled, Relentless, Monstrous appearance** *(see below, +3 CP)*, **Wanted** *(Hegemony; +3 CP)*

MONSTROUS APPEARANCE (+3 CP): Nobody will instinctively trust the Character and he will systematically be taken for a non-human creature until he speaks and explains himself.

SPECIAL DISADVANTAGES

CONTROLLED MUTATIONS FOR TH BETA 453 (4 CP + GENETIC TYPE MUTATIONS): Reinforced skeleton x 2, reinforced skin (natural armor 5) x2, Chameleon (-3 to opponents' Perception tests if completely still), fangs, tail (Hand-to-hand combat only, reach +1, base damage 1D6 + throwing wrestling combat technique), claws, regeneration, armored eyeshade (Head armor +3, no critical strike to the head, infrared vision).

ADVANTAGES TECHNO-HYBRID: Maximum depth (TH Beta 453): -14,000 m, Underwater perception (TH Beta 453): 75 m

SKILLS (10CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Athletics (8+5) 13; Endurance (5+5) 10; Underwater maneuvering (8+6) 14.

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (8+6) 14; Hand-to-hand combat (8+7) 15; Heavy weapons (melee) (10+1) 11; Martial arts (Wrestling) (5+2) 7.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (5+1) 6; Special weapons (Hybrid wrist weapon/COO+PER) (5+11) 16.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Intimidation ((-3 or +5)+6) 3 or 11.

KNOWLEDGE: Knowledge of a nation (Hegemony, orig.) (-2+9) 7; Tactics (Special ops) (1+5) 6.

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Stealth/Silent movement (4+5) 9; Camouflage/concealment (5+1) 6.

LANGUAGES: Foreign language (Neo-azuran) (-2+5) 3; Native language (Olosakian) (Special) 9; Sign language (5+5) 10

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (3+7) 10; Orientation (4+6) 10; Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) (1+10) 11; Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations) (1+4) 5; Survival (3+7) 10.

SPECIAL SKILLS: Hybrid (7+5) 12.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Danyka Defafnyr

AGE: 32

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Please calm down, I'm sure we can talk this over."

Unflappable, manipulative, deliberate

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

DIPLOMAT

BACKGROUND

The states and factions of the entire world live in a very fragile equilibrium, sustained by a perpetual war of influence. You're not a soldier and yet your sphere of action—politics and diplomacy—sometimes resembles a battlefield. No warships or rifles, but tight negotiations, secret deal-making, fragile accords, encounters where what isn't said is more important than the official declarations... Not all combat takes place with weapons and, in these diplomatic battles, the tactics are no less complex than in a conventional war.

Sometimes, conflicts break out, sadly. Then it's necessary to manage the crisis, find allies, and negotiate with the enemy. You're convinced that violence doesn't resolve everything. It's the last resort, and you know that it's possible to win a war without even having to fight, through an effective diplomatic strategy. It's too bad if this must be accompanied by more narrow-minded maneuvers and discreet manipulations. The whole world is just one big game of chess for which there are no rules.

You were born in the Coral Republic where you were trained to become a diplomat. For the last few years you have been assigned to the diplomatic services in Equinox. However, you are seriously considering taking an extended vacation to travel and see the world.

ATTRIBUTES (6 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	8	10	10	12	14	16	14	18
N.A.*	0	1	1	1	2	3	2	3

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	13
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	-1	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	+0
STUN THRESHOLD	10	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	20

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city, Upper class, Education, Higher Education (Political Science, 1 CP)

SAVINGS: 9,900 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Communication jammers (level 6), Communicator Global 12 + Computer (personal assistant, TL 4, Gen. 4), holdout pistol, concealed knife.

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 12; Allies or suppliers: 8; Adversaries: 2; Enemy: 5

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Phobia *(Filth, germs, +1 CP)*; **Fame** *(fame level 7/fame point 2)*, **Connections** *(Equinox, +22 points)*, **Private cabin** *(Equinox, 10m²)*, **Corruption/Blackmail** *(level 10)*, **Achievement, High Places, Diplomatic network** *(Equinox)*, **Training** *(Armed Combat, 1 CP)*, **Training** *(Computing, 1 CP)*

SKILLS (12 CP)

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (1+8) 9

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (3+7) 10.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Eloquence/Persuasion (6+8) 14; Empathic analysis (5+7) 12; Socializing/seduction (6+8) 14.

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (6+5) 11; Education/General culture (6+9) 15; Finding information (6+5) 11; Knowledge of a nation (Coral Republic, orig.) (6+13) 19; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox) (6+10) 16; Knowledge of an organization (Coral Republic political sphere) (6+5) 11; Knowledge of an organization (Cult of the Trident) (6+5) 11; Knowledge of a nation (Hegemony) (6+5) 11; Science/Specialized knowledge (Political Science) (6+7) 13; Science/Specialized knowledge (Law/legislation) (6+5) 11; Science/Specialized knowledge (Geography) (6-3) 3; Science/Specialized knowledge (History) (6+2) 8.

LANGUAGES: Foreign language (Neo-azuran) (6+5) 11; Native language (Isitacian) (special) 19; Specialized language (Absolanese) (6+5) 11; Ancient language (Azuran) (6+5) 11.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations)(4+4) 8

TECHNIQUES: Computing (6+5) 11; Espionage/Surveillance (6+7) 13.

SPECIAL SKILLS: Mental shield (4+9) 13.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Erik Folkor

AGE: 33

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"In the water, I am free."

Shy, reserved, calm

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

HYBRID SCOUT

BACKGROUND

Full title: Special Forces Scout

You were born different, able to breathe underwater and endure the freezing cold and the enormous pressure of the underwater world.

Even if you're freer in mobility than any normal human being, it's not always an advantage. Many would pay a lot of money to have the pleasure of dissecting your corpse, in order to discover the secret of your genetic origins, "for science's sake." So you have learned to be cautious and go unnoticed. Your real world is the sea's waters, not the air-breathing world of the humans.

In any case, self-pity won't get you anywhere. You had to learn how to turn your differences into assets, strengths that can be useful to others. You approached the very people who have more to gain by having you on their side than selling you to the highest bidder. The Cult of the Trident and the Watchers offered you this comfort: who would turn down the services of someone who's able to discreetly and quickly sneak into enemy territory, to spy on them in his own land? You realized that your unique abilities could give you independence even inside the most rigid military organizations.

You still crave freedom all the same. There are still so many things to see and, maybe one day, you will find this haven of peace you long for so much. Recently, the Watchers and the Cult of the Trident have been leaving you plenty of spare time to go off and explore on your own. It may be the perfect time for an adventure, if you can just find some people who, like you, are looking for new discoveries.

ATTRIBUTES (6 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	13	16	16	17	14	9	13	8
N.A.*	2	3	3	3	2	0	2	0

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	15
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1	DAMAGE RESISTANCE (UNDERWATER/DRY PLACE)	-5/+1
STUN THRESHOLD	14	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	24

** Natural Ability*

GENETIC TYPE: Natural Hybrid (5 CP)

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city, Middle class, Education

SAVINGS: 32,000 Sols.

PERSONAL GEAR: Dagger, Hydrating armor, Light Hybrid diving armor, Medium pistol, light handgun (supercavitation)

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 7; Allies or suppliers: 5; Adversaries: 3; Enemy: 0.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Age-Old Enemy *(+3 CP)*; **Natural Weakness** *(poisons, +1 CP)*; **Frail** *(+1 CP)*, **Marine mammals** *(dolphin)*, **Elite unit, Hybrids fellowship, Performance, Gear** *(14,000 Sols used)*, **Fame** *(fame level 11/fame points 4)*, **Connections** *(20 points)*

ADVANTAGES HYBRID

Maximum depth: -11,000m, **Visual perception** (underwater/dry place): +3/-3, **Underwater perception:** 140 m

SKILLS (16 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Athletics (5+1) 6; Endurance (5+1) 6.

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (5+7) 12; Hand-to-hand combat (5+7) 12; Martial arts (Wrestling) (6+4) 10.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (5+3) 8.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Empathic analysis (3+2) 5.

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (0+3) 3; Education/General Culture (0+6) 6; Knowledge of a nation (Mediterranean Union) (0+2) 2; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox) (0+7) 7; Knowledge of an organization (Cult of the Trident) (0+8) 8; Knowledge of an organization (Watchers) (0+7) 7; Tactics (Special ops) (3+9) 12; Science/Specialized knowledge (Geography) (0-2) -2

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Stealth/Silent movement (5+7) 12, Escape (5+1) 6

LANGUAGES: Native language (Néo-azuran) (Special) 16; Language (Oceanian) (0+5) 5; Sign language (5+5) 10; Specific language (Exonese) (0+5) 5, Specific language (Inesis) (0+5) 5.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (4+7) 11; Orientation (5+6) 11; Survival (5+7) 12; Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) (3+10) 13; ; Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations) (3+3) 6

SPECIAL SKILLS: Hybrid (5+10) 15.

TECHNIQUES: Computing (0-2) -2

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Laurent Lefevbre

AGE: 40

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"I'm too old for this shit..."

Calm, careful, wary

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

INVESTIGATOR

BACKGROUND

Everybody has secrets.

Your mission very often is to find out about the ones that nobody wants to see resurfacing. Most of the time you work for private firms that want to know more about their employees (especially those suspected of selling information to the competition), about the activities of their branches, or... about their competitors.

Discretion is the number one rule and you often have to hide your true identity. The world is a viper's nest, filled with spies, undercover agents, and secret ops. Better to be cautious, use your contacts, and gather intelligence about everything and everyone. Even about your employers...

Equinox is a huge city, and there is no lack of work, especially when one works for the Cult of the Trident. Then again, sometimes a case will take a bad turn and your investigation ends up having repercussions you never could have foreseen. You stumbled across an organ trafficking operation that involved several executives from Cortex, including a special operations director, a powerful character who has connections all over the world... He knows who you are, and he wants you dead. Maybe now would be a good time to disappear, for a while at least. You know, there's nothing like an adventure to make you vanish...

ATTRIBUTES (0 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	12	10	13	10	13	13	11	13
N.A.*	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	11
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-1
STUN THRESHOLD	11	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	21

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city, Middle-class, Self-taught

SAVINGS: 116,000 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Codebreaker (lvl. 12), Computer (personal assistant, TN 4/Gen. 5), Goggles (light amplification and tactical subsystem), Glove (environment analyzer); Intelligent camouflage clothes (cloak/penalty -5), Kevlar vest (body), Medium pistol with license, Video camera.

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 23 (1 is a gang); Allies or suppliers: 5 (1 is an influential person); Adversaries: 7; Enemy: 1 (+1 age-old enemy)

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Enhanced attribute, Decoration *x2*, ***Performance*** *x2*, **Informant network, Age-old enemy, Fame** *(fame level 10/fame points 3)*, **Database** *(criminals and criminal organizations) 14*, **Database** *(poisons and drugs) 14*, **Corruption/Blackmail** *(1 level 10 and 1 level 12)*

SKILLS (23 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Athletics (3+0) 3; Endurance (2+1) 3.

COMBAT (MELEE): Hand-to-hand combat (3+10) 13; Martial arts (wrestling) (3+2) 5, armed combat (3+11) 14.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (4+12) 16; Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles (4+0) 4.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Leadership (3+0) 3; Intimidation (3+5) 8; Empathic analysis (4+3) 7

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (4+4) 8; Education/General knowledge (4+6) 10; Finding information (4+9) 13; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox, orig.) (4+10) 14; Knowledge of an organization (Organized crime) (4+6) 10; Knowledge of an organization (Watchers) (4+5) 9; Knowledge of an organization (Cult of the Trident) (4+5) 9; Knowledge of an organization (dealers) (4+6) 10.

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Discretion/Shadowing (3+12) 15; Stealth/Silent movement (3+9) 12.

LANGUAGES: Native language (Neo-azuran) (Special) 15; Specific language (Solean) (2+5) 7.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations) (3+12) 15; Observation (3+7) 10; Orientation (3+7) 10; Survival (2+6) 8; Hunting/tracking (3+7) 10.

TECHNIQUES: Computing (4+6) 10; First aid (3+2) 5; Security systems (4+4) 8; Spying/Surveillance (4+6) 10; electronics (4+1) 5

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Aya "Ruyjin" Decadencia

AGE: 30

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Let me me handle this, I'll finish him."

Arrogant, self-confident, hot headed

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

MARINE COMMANDO

BACKGROUND

You are not a simple soldier.

You are a Special Forces soldier, and an expert in underwater combat operations. The underwater world is not made for humans, but you have trained to survive and fight in these icy waters. Now you're (almost) as at ease as a Hybrid. Okay, you still need diving exo-armor, but that's the kind of machine in which one feels safe.

You can't help feeling a little superior to other soldiers. Your missions are tough and need major tactical and technical preparation. Everything must be organized and planned. There's no room for improvisation. That's the difference between you and the limited operations run by simple grunts. They can die by the hundreds like cannon fodder, hoping to overwhelm the enemy with their numbers. You cost too much to be sent to the battle without adequate preparation.

You were trained by the Mediterranean Union and you have fought against the troops of the Polar Alliance. You have a perfect combat record and you were even an officer for a while in the army. Then the Dark Reaper came, a cyborg from the Polar Alliance who killed every member of your team. You were blinded by your thirst of revenge, you disobeyed orders and you lost your officer rank. Now you have left the army and you are planning to go off on an adventure to find the Reaper. . . Rumor has it that he has left the Polar army.

ATTRIBUTES (8 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	14	14	16	16	16	11	14	9
N.A.*	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	0

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	16
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+2	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-2
STUN THRESHOLD	14	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	24

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Middle sized station, Middle-class, Education, Higher Education (Military school, 1 CP)

SAVINGS: 45,600 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Dagger, Typhoon diving exo-armor, Heavy pistol (with permit), Light handgun (supercavitation pistol), assault rifle (supercavitation rifle), Plastitanium fibers armor (full).

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 5; Allies or suppliers: 2; Adversaries: 1; Enemy: 0

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Age-old enemy *(+3 CP)*, **Enhanced attribute** *x2*, **Battle, Decoration, Hero** *x2*, **Elite** *x2*, **Fame** *(fame level 11)*, **Gear** *(33,000 Sols)*

SKILLS (14 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: FOF breathing (4+6) 10, Underwater maneuvering (4+10) 14

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (5+5) 10 ; Hand-to-hand combat (5+8) 13; Martial arts (Wrestling) (6+4) 10; Heavy weapons (Melee) (4+3) 7

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (6+10) 16; Heavy weapons (6+5) 11; Bows, spearguns and crossbows (6+6) 12; Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles (6+8) 14.

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (2+1) 3; Education/General Knowledge (2+8) 10; Knowledge of a nation (Mediterranean Union, orig.) (2+8) 10; Knowledge of a nation (Polar Alliance) (2+6) 8; Knowledge of an organization (Mediterranean Union army) (2+6) 8; Strategy (2+1) 3; Tactics (commando operations) (4+7) 11.

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Camouflage/Concealment (6-3) 3; Stealth/Silent movement (6+0) 6.

LANGUAGES: Native language (Oceanian) (Special) 15; Sign language (6+3) 9; Specific language (Neo-azuran) (2+7) 9.

PILOTING: Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) (6+9) 15; Armor Maneuvering (External exo-armors) (6+5) 11; Piloting (Ground vehicles) (6+0) 6; Piloting (Underwater scooters) (6+1) 7.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (5+5) 10; Orientation (6+5) 11; Survival (4+0) 4. Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) (4+7) 11; Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations) (4+5) 9;

TECHNIQUES: Computing (2+1) 3; Electronics (2+3) 5; Mechanics (Exo-armors) (2+2) 4; Explosives (3+5) 8; Soundscan analysis (4+8) 12.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Jules Saint-Ambert

AGE: 29

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"For the League... and for the money."

Not very talkative, cautious, vindictive

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

MERCENARY

BACKGROUND

There is always a need for someone stronger, or rather someone ready to do the dirty job for those who want to keep their hands clean.

Good, that's why you're here. War and combat are in your blood, a godsend in a world inundated by a state of permanent war. There are constant threats that need to be taken care of: pirates, looters, sworn enemies, and raiders who get a little too greedy. Constant threats and never enough warriors—that's why mercenaries have become a veritable institution, led by firms powerful enough to have become true factions.

Maybe one day you'll come across someone stronger than you. Underwater nations sometimes have to fight against problems more serious than a simple attack by enemy soldiers. There is no shortage of threats: Burrowers, mutant horrors, underwater monsters. The world is full of inconceivable things. When threats like that occur, you need to be able to count on a good amount of fire-power, a good plan, and good leadership. Ah, and good pay, too. Hard work deserves a reward.

The Red League is a true haven for mercenaries... So it's a good thing you were born there. Although you decided not to join the army, you love your country and you proudly wear its emblem on your clothes. Your opponents are not foreign soldiers—well, not always. No, your opponents are criminals, other mercenaries, or the ones you hate the most, flesh traders. For many years, you served as a member of the Lock mercenary group, but recently your group was the victim of an ambush and all your comrades were killed. You barely managed to escape with your life and you found refuge in Equinox. Now, you have other ambitions, a yearning to explore the world and find adventure... but you have not forgotten the dramatic events that you have been through and you are still looking for revenge.

ATTRIBUTES (5 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	15	14	16	13	13	10	13	10
N.A.*	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	1

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	13
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+2	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-2
STUN THRESHOLD	14	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	24

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city (Nazca), Slums, Delinquency/crime

SAVINGS: 33,500 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Exo-armor alpha Typhoon (on credit, debt: 320,000 Sols), Dagger, Medium pistol, supercavitation underwater heavy pistol, Kevlar suit (full), Heavy assault rifle, Subdermal plates level 2

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 6; Allies or suppliers: 3; Adversaries: 3; Enemy: 1

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Hard-boiled *(1CP)*, **Relentless** *(1CP)*, **Extra money** *(1CP)*, **Gear** *(52,000 Sols, used)*, **Enhanced attribute, Achievement** *(x2)*, **Performance, Fame** *(fame level 6/ fame point 2)*

SKILLS (12 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Athletics (5+3) 8; Endurance (4+2) 6; Underwater maneuvering (5+0) 5; FOF breathing ((4+4) 8.

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (5+6) 11; Hand-to-hand combat (5+5) 10; Martial arts (Defense techniques) (5+2) 7; Martial arts (Offense techniques) (5+2) 7; Martial arts (Wrestling) (5+5) 10.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Heavy weapons (5+2) 7; Handguns (5+10) 15; Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles (5+10) 15.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Intimidation (3+4) 7.

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (2+0) 2; Business/Trafficking (weapons) (2-2) 0; Education/General knowledge (2+5) 7; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox) (2+1) 3; Knowledge of a nation (Red League) (2+8) 10; Knowledge of organizations (Mercenaries) (2+5) 7; Knowledge of organizations (smugglers) (2+2) 4; Navigation (2-3) -1; Tactics (Special ops) (3+5) 8.

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Camouflage/Concealment (4-2) 2; Pickpocket (5+0) 5; Stealth/Silent movement (4+0) 4.

LANGUAGES: Foreign language (Neo-azuran) (2+5) 7; Native language (Olakar) (Special) 12.

PILOTING: Piloting (underwater scooters) (4+0) 4; remote piloting (3+5) 8; Armor Maneuvering (underwater exo-armor) (5+5) 10, Armor Maneuvering (external exo-armor) (5+5) 10

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (4+5) 9; Orientation (4+5) 9; Survival (3+0) 0; Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations)(3+6) 9; Knowledge of an environment (surface)(3+0) 3, Knowledge of an environment (underground)(3+0) 3

TECHNIQUES: Explosives (3+5) 8; First aid (3+5) 8; Security systems (2-2) 0; Soundscan analysis (3-3) 0; Traps (3+0) 3.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Dimiline Deximiline

AGE: 31

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Dive! Dive!"

Passionate, disciplinarian, calm

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

OFFICER

BACKGROUND

A ship is like a living organism, and you are its brain. Commanding a ship requires solid skills, but also a sharp mind and nerves of steel. It is indeed necessary to be able to react quickly and keep your cool under any circumstances, especially during naval combat. You also have to make sure that crew members don't panic, and stay organized and motivated.

A ship is a closed and confined space, much more so than a station. It's a small world of its own, with its own laws. You are aware that you're responsible for the crew's ability to function properly, because a single mishap could lead the ship to its demise. You have learned to cut your crew some slack when they're having fun to blow off steam, allowing you to rule with an iron fist when it becomes necessary. Being the master of your ship requires some sacrifices on your part!

You were born in one of the many nomadic fleets of ships that make a living from scrap materials and trading. Ever since you were a little girl you've wanted to become a ship's captain. During a stop over in Equinox, you decided to join the Watchers, and you followed an intensive training course to become a captain. Unfortunately, because of a recent incident, you have been suspended from duty. Maybe the time has come for you to leave the service and start a new career. . . as an adventurer.

ATTRIBUTES (4 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	9	10	12	14	12	16	14	14
N.A.*	0	1	1	2	1	3	2	2

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	13
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+0	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	+0
STUN THRESHOLD	11	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	21

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Nomadic ship, Working class, Education, Higher education (Naval School, -1 CP)

- **SAVINGS:** 115,500 Sols.
- **PERSONAL GEAR:** Second hand Vestal (worn: Integrity 18, Maneuverability 14, Damage resistance +3, Armor rating 4, Speed 9 knots/on credit, debt 380,000), Computer (personal assistant, TN 3/Gen. 3), Medium pistol (with permit), Spider protection (full).

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 10; Allies or suppliers: 9; Adversaries: 2; Enemy: 0

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Shares *(-1 CP/Nomad group)*, **Training** *(mechanics vessels, -1CP)*, **Gear** *(54,000/used)*, **Friends in every harbor, Decoration/ Accomplishment, Debt reduction** *(-25%)*, *Fame (fame level 5)*, *Connections (1 supplier: Influential person, 1 Ally: influential person, 1 Ally: nomad group)*

SKILLS (12 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Endurance (3+0) 3; Underwater maneuvering (1+1) 2

COMBAT (MELEE): Hand-to-hand combat (1+5) 6

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (2+10) 12

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Leadership (4+10) 14.

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (6+0) 6; Cartography (6+5) 11; Education/General knowledge (6+6) 12; Knowledge of a nation/organization (Nomadic ships) (6+5) 11; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox) (6+5) 11; Knowledge of a nation (Hegemony) (6+2) 8; Knowledge of an organization (Watchers) (6+5) 6; Navigation (6+7) 13; Tactics (Naval combat) (5+8) 13; Science/Specialized knowledge (Geography) (6+2) 8

LANGUAGES: Native language (Neo-azuran) (Special) 15; Specific language (Solean) (6+5) 11.

PILOTING: Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) (3+6) 9; Piloting (Ground vehicles) (3+1) 4; Piloting (Heavy ships) (6+6) 12; Piloting (Light ships) (6+8) 14, Piloting (underwater scooters) (3+1) 4;

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (3+5) 8; Orientation (3+5) 8. Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) (5+6) 11; Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations) (5+5) 10

TECHNIQUES: Computing (6+1) 7; Mechanics (Ships/ Underwater Fighters) (6+6) 12; Onboard weapons/artillery (6+5) 11; Soundscan analysis (5+5) 10.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: David Philen (OUR 43268)

AGE: 27

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Target acquired... Target destroyed."

Reckless, fighter, extravagant

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

PILOT

BACKGROUND

Fast. Stealthy. Lethal. These are the basic characteristics of a good fighter pilot.

It's extremely difficult to fight in this dark and cold underwater environment because you seldom see your opponent directly. This means that you have to be cunning, and play with the distances and reliefs of the sea floors, swooping down on the enemy before he can even detect you. Fighters are ideal tools for that kind of thing.

Without the human factor, however, the tool is nothing. Whereas the biggest ships can count on numerous crew members, you are piloting your machine alone. This means that you have to be the best, be versatile, and be completely autonomous. At least you are the only master and commander onboard! You have trained hard to be what you have become today. You deal with the hazards of the job, but you really hope that someday your abilities will be fully appreciated. After all, you are often on the front lines...

You were born in the Hegemony, with the identity number OUR43268. You love the Hegemony, it is a great nation and you have joined the army where you have been commended for your skills. Unfortunately, your tendency to not listen to orders and your inability to break up a fight have earned you a temporary suspension from duty. Therefore, you have been sent to Equinox to join the Watchers

ATTRIBUTES (8 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	14	13	13	17	14	16	12	10
N.A.*	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	1

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	15
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+2	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-2 (-4)
STUN THRESHOLD	13	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	23

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city, Upper class, Education, Higher Education (Naval school, 1 CP)

SAVINGS: 79,200 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Computer (personal assistant, TN 3/Gen. 3), Dagger, Heavy pistol, "last chance" pilot armor, second hand Fulgur (worn : Integrity 20, Maneuverability 14, Damage resistance 0, Armor Rating 7, Speed 21 knots/on credit, debt 126,125),

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 4; Allies or suppliers: 2; Adversaries: 1; Enemy: 0

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Mental disorder *(combat madness, +2CP)*, **Battle, Decoration, Hero, Elite** *(x2)*, **Enhanced attribute, Gear** *(32,000, used)*, **Fame** *(fame level 10)*

MUTATIONS (-4CP)

Reinforced skeleton, Reinforced skin (natural armor 3)

SKILLS (9 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Athletics (4+6) 10; Endurance (3+5) 8, FOF breathing (3+5) 8

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (4+6) 10; Hand-to-hand combat (4+0) 4

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (4+10) 14.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Leadership (2+1) 3.

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (6+4) 10; Cartography (6+2) 8; Education/General knowledge (6+9) 15; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox) (6+4) 10; Knowledge of a nation (Hegemony, orig.) (6+5) 11; Navigation (6+2) 8; Science/Specialized knowledge (Arms/weapons systems) (6-2) 4, Tactics (Naval combat) (6+5) 11.

LANGUAGES: Native language (Olosakian) (Special) 18; Specific language (Neo-azuran) (6+5) 11; Sign language (4+1) 5.

PILOTING: Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) (5+1) 6; Piloting (Underwater fighters) (6+8) 14; Remote piloting (6+1) 7.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (3+5) 8; Orientation (5+5) 10. Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) (6+4) 10; Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations) (6+5) 11

TECHNIQUES: Computing (6+1) 7; Electronics (6–3) 3; Mechanics (Ships/Underwater Fighters) (6+1) 7; Onboard weapons/artillery (6+6) 12; Soundscan analysis (6+6) 12.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Gram Malmsturm

AGE: 31

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"I know where to find a treasure. . . but first I need a beer."

Dreamer, fighter, party animal

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

PIRATE

BACKGROUND

"Prepare to board!" This clamor is sweet to your ears...

You are a predator of the seas, proud of who you are and of your blood brothers and sisters. Let the enemy shake, because you'll never let anyone get in your way. Despite your enjoyment of fighting, you are not a mindless brute; boarding a ship needs a lot of cunning and you are here to get rich, not die stupidly.

You are aware you are a part of the legend of the seas. Many are the merchants who fear you, whether they're right or wrong to do so. You are an outcast, but all you want is to share the riches more equitably! Rumors about you make you smile. They think you're just a bloodthirsty monster. Bullshit! You are no crueler than many decorated generals...

At least you can count on the fear you inspire... Let's have a good catch, my fellow pirates, and tonight the drink will flow freely!

You have spent almost all your life in the Pirate Kingdoms, moving from station to station, one crew after another. The pirates have taught you everything you know and you have joined a fellowship. Unfortunately, the group was wiped out by the Watchers. In fact, it's even more unfortunate as it happened when you had just found a treasure map, . . a real one. Now, all you can do is try to gather a few people who are up for an adventure to help you get your hands on this treasure, and you just know it's going to be legendary.

ATTRIBUTES (7 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	15	13	13	12	14	13	16	13
N.A.*	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	13
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+2	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-2
STUN THRESHOLD	14	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	24

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Nomadic ship, Working class, Self-taught

SAVINGS: 9,200 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Exo-alpha underwater exo-armor, Heavy pistol, Knife, Saber.

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 7; Allies or suppliers: 3; Adversaries: 4; Enemy: 1

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Wanted *(+3 CP, Coral republic)*; **Ambidextrous** *(1CP)*, **Training** *(Education/General Knowledge/1CP)*, **Enhanced attribute, Performance** *x2*, **Fellowship** *x 2*, **Map, Gear** *(42,000 Sols)*, **Corruption/Blackmail** *(corrupt individual at level 11)*, **Fame** *(fame level 8/fame points 2)*

SKILLS (14 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Acrobatics/Balance (4+1) 5; FOF breathing (5+0) 5, Underwater maneuvering (4+8) 12

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (4+12) 16; Hand-to-hand combat (4+8) 12; Martial arts (wrestling) (3+7) 10.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Bows, spearguns and crossbows (4+7) 11; Handguns (4+8) 12; Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles (4+7) 11; Throwing weapons (4+8) 12.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Intimidation (5+5) 10.

KNOWLEDGE: Education/General Knowledge (4+6) 10; Gambling (5+5) 10; Knowledge of a nation (Pirate nations, orig.) (4+5) 9; Navigation (4-3) 1; Tactics (Special ops) (3+0) 3.

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Stealth/Silent movement (3+0) 3.

LANGUAGES: Native language (Ithraxian) (Special) 16; Specific language (Neo-azuran) (4+3) 7.

PILOTING: Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) (3+10) 13; Armor Maneuvering (External exo-armors) (3+5) 8; Piloting (Light ships) (4+0) 4, Piloting (underwater scooters) (3+7) 10; Remote piloting (3+5) 8.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Observation (5+7) 12; Orientation (3+5) 8; Survival (4+4) 8; Knowledge of an environment (Oceans) (3+9) 12; Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations) (3+5) 8

TECHNIQUES: Electronics (4+1) 5; Mechanics (Exo-armors) (4+5) 9; Mechanics (Ships/Underwater Fighters) (4+3) 7; Explosives (4-3) 1; Soundscan analysis (3+3) 6.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Pierrequinox of Cognard

AGE: 31

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Keep calm, no matter what..."

Quiet, calm, caring

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

PRIEST OF THE TRIDENT

BACKGROUND

The Polaris Effect is a dangerous weapon. Few members of the Cult of the Trident are able to master this mysterious energy. Most of them are devoted to the the organization's many other activities: research, diplomacy, science, and medicine... You didn't forget to nourish your mind while you were learning to control your powers.

You are indeed one of the few to have this gift—some call it a curse— the ability to create a Polaris Effect. You are aware there is a certain amount of danger, and the Flux even accelerated your aging, therefore you learned to use your ability with moderation. You know only too well the disastrous results of the "Polaris incidents" triggered without any control. For the time being, you have been taught how to act wisely, happy that the Cult offered you a way to channel this power.

You were born on a small station. Your earliest memory is the moment when raiders murdered your family and all the other inhabitants of your station. . . You were only eight years old and you burned every last one of those who ravaged your home. Then you remained alone, in the dark, locked inside the tomb that was once your whole world. Was it months or maybe years before someone finally came to save you? You can't remember any more. When they arrived, you wanted to burn them all too. . . all of them. But the man who walked towards you spoke softly to you; he calmed you down and then took you away with him. On Equinox, the priests of the Trident taught you to control your fearsome power. They gave you an education, and they gave you a home. You have now earned the rank of assistant priest and you are ready to travel the world, to spread the teachings of the Cult and search for other people like you, whose powers could endanger those around them, even without meaning to do so. Therefore, you have decided to join a group of adventurers to sail the seven seas. . .

ATTRIBUTES (4 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	12	14	12	12	12	14	16	11
N.A.*	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	1

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	12
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-2
STUN THRESHOLD	12	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	22

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Small station, Upper class, Education

- **SAVINGS:** 23,200 Sols
- **PERSONAL GEAR:** Combat staff, Computer (personal assistant, TN 3/Gen. 3), Inhibitor

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 4; Allies or suppliers: 3; Adversaries: 3; Enemy: 0

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Polaris Effect *(-5 CP)*, **Mental Disorder** *(Hallucinations, +2 CP)*, **Phobia** *(Darkness, +2 CP)*, **Enhanced attribute, Training** *(Hand-to-hand combat, -1CP)*, *Private cabin (Equinox, 9m²)*, **Gear** *(39,000 Sols)*, **Fame** *4 (fame level 4/fame points 2)*

SKILLS (12 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Underwater maneuvering (2+1) 3

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (2+10) 12; Hand-to-hand combat (2+6) 8, Martial arts (Defense techniques) (2+8) 10

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Eloquence/Persuasion (3+0) 3; Empathic analysis (3+5) 8, Leadership (4+0) 4.

KNOWLEDGE: Education/General knowledge (4+6) 10; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox) (4+5) 9; Knowledge of an organization (Cult of the Trident) (4+5) 9; ; Knowledge of an organization (Fellowship of the Black Sun) (4-2) 2; Science (Psychology) (4+5) 9, Science (History) (4-2) 2.

LANGUAGES: Native language (Neo-azuran) (Special) 16; Specific language (Absolanese) (4+0) 4; Specific language (Inesisian) (4+0) 4.

PILOTING: Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors) (2+1) 3; Piloting (underwater scooters) (2+2) 4.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Knowledge of an environment (Ocean) (3-2) 1, Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations) (3+5) 8, Observation (4+5) 9, Survival (4+5) 9.

TECHNIQUES: First aid (3+3) 6.

SPECIAL SKILLS: Body control (5+1) 6; Mastery of the Polaris Effect (6+8) 14; Mind shield (6+5) 11, Mastery of the Polaris echo (5+3) 8, Meditation (6+6) 12 .

POLARIS POWERS

Psychic bolts (5+6) 11; **Molecular healing** (5+3) 8; **Disruption of reality** (5+1) 6.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Varik Xil

AGE: 33

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"This is first class gear, I can guarantee it."

Cheerful, inquisitive, savvy

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

SMUGGLER

BACKGROUND

The world is full of opportunities. All you need is to find your way around a few customs checkpoints and have a little nerve.

Everything can be bought or sold in this world, for those who are ready to pay the price. Illegal merchandise is certainly the thing that brings in the most money: weapons, military equipment, sensitive information... The less scrupulous ones even take part in far more horrific trafficking. For the moment, you've started to earn yourself a reputation as an arms "merchant." It's a job that comes with some risks, but it has the advantage of being stable; everyone needs to protect themselves. Everyone...

Even the bare necessities and basic gear are capable of generating a profit, because the majority of the population lives by tinkering and salvage. New gear is basically reserved for governments or the military. So most stations are content to be able to patch up their equipment for the lowest price. Who cares what sketchy source it comes from? With a little luck, the real owners of this stolen gear won't be able to trace it back to you... or maybe they will. You have had to run away from the Red League region known as the Frontier. You have spent most of your life there, but now you've got trouble with a few people who don't like you selling what's actually theirs. To add to the inconvenience, they also happen to be the worst possible people to annoy: buccaneers. You have fled to Equinox, hoping to be able to find safety in numbers. After all, trafficking is ok for a while, but you have plans for bigger things. An adventure, maybe?

ATTRIBUTES (5 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	13	12	14	16	13	12	12	13
N.A.*	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	14
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-1
STUN THRESHOLD	12	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	22

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Small station, Working class, Technical apprenticeship (Works/Workshop)

- **SAVINGS:** 45,600 Sols
- **PERSONAL GEAR:** Dagger, Light assault rifle, Kevlar vest (body), Medium pistol, Second hand explorer (Maneuverability 20, Integrity 18, Damage Resistance +2, Armor rating 5) (on credit, debt: 650,000 Sols).

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 15; Allies or suppliers: 5; Adversaries: 4; Enemy: 1

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Wanted *(+2 CP: Flesh traders)*, **Enhanced attribute** *(Adaptation)*, **Training** *(Education/General Culture 1 CP)*, **Training** *(Armor Maneuvering (underwater exo-armor), 1 CP)*, **Performance, Achievement, Hideout/cache, Fame** *(fame level 7)*, **Inventory of goods** *(light weapons level 13 on Equinox/Ammunition level 9 on Equinox)*, **Hideout/cache** *(level 11 on Equinox/level 8 in Red League)*

SKILLS (15 CP)

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (4+8) 12; Hand-to-hand combat (4+5) 9.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (4+9) 13; Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles (4+5) 9.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Eloquence/Persuasion (3+10) 13; Intimidation (3+0) 3.

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (2+5) 7; Education/General Culture (2+8) 10; Knowledge of a nation (Red league, orig.) (2+8) 10; Knowledge of an organization (Organized crime) (2+5) 7; Knowledge of an organization (Pirates) (2+5) 7; Knowledge of organizations (Smugglers) (2+8) 10; Navigation (2+8) 10; Business/Trafficking (Weapons) (3+10) 13 .

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Camouflage/Concealment (5-3) 2

LANGUAGES: Native language (Olakar) (Special) 14; Specialized language (Solean) (2+5) 7; Language (Neo-azuran) (2+5) 7.

PILOTING: Piloting (Light ships) (2+7) 9, Piloting (scooter) (5+5) 10, Armor Maneuvering (underwater exo-armor) (5+8): 13, Armor Maneuvering (external exo-armor) (5+5): 10

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: underwater maneuvering (4+1) 5

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations)(5+5) 10

TECHNIQUES: Forgery (Bureaucracy) (3+5) 8; Soundscan analysis (4+5) 9, Aquaculture/Livestock Farming (2+2) 4, Electronics (2+5) 7; Mechanics (Generators/ Life support systems) (2+2) 4; Mechanics (ships/underwater fighters) (2+4) 6

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Annabell "Florence" Antares

AGE: 29

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Stop moving, you'll open your wound up again."

Honest, independent, unshakable

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

SURGEON

BACKGROUND

You are an orphan, but you were taken into care by Cortex, one of the greatest companies in the underwater world. You were taught by the best medical and surgical specialists. You could have done one of the great courses in cybertechnology, genetics, or in one of the other prestigious disciplines, but you quickly understood that your desire for independence and your frank way of speaking would never open the right doors for you.

So you turned to emergency surgery, an area of medicine that matched your personality well but also happens to be the department of Cortex with the lowest budget. You're hardly rolling in money, but at least you don't lack for work, and you don't soil your hands in doubtful "medical" practices. Certainly, you too have blood on your hands (it's crazy, all the blood that a human body can lose), but for good reasons. Are you an idealist? No, no more than most people. You simply know that you enjoy a certain immunity: no one shoots the person who might save your life. That's your secret: the people whose lives you've saved are innumerable and, among them, there are several high dignitaries and even a few crime bosses. Those guys know that they owe you one. During all your years working for Cortex, you believed in those ideals, but recently you've heard a few rumors that have led you to think that there may be something bad going on in the company. You have decided to take some time for yourself and take some extended leave from your work to see if you can uncover the truth. And while you're at it, why not see the world?

ATTRIBUTES (5 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	11	12	14	14	12	16	14	10
N.A.*	1	1	2	2	1	3	2	1

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	13
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+0	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-1
STUN THRESHOLD	12	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	22

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city, Slums, Education, Higher Education (Medicine, 1 CP)

SAVINGS: 7,200 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: portable lab, first aid kit, Computer (personal assistant, TN 3/Gen. 3), Medkit, 3 stabilizing patches, light pistol, knife, NBC suit

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 3; Allies or suppliers: 3; Adversaries: 3; Enemy: 0

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Nerves of steel *(1CP)*, **Training** *(handguns, 1CP)*, **Personal medicine cabinet** *(level 12)*, **Gear** *(20,000 Sols, used)*, **Database, medical** *(diseases, level 11)*, **Fame** *(fame level 4/ fame point 1)*

SKILLS (12 CP)

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (3+6) 9; Hand-to-hand combat (3+6) 9.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (3+6) 9.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Empathic analysis (4+0) 4; Intimidation (3+1) 4

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Pickpocket (4+0) 4

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (6+3) 9; Finding information (6+2) 8; Education/General culture (6+6) 12; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox, orig.) (6+8) 14; Knowledge of a nation (Coral Republic) (6+2) 8 ; Knowledge of an organization (Cortex) (6+5) 11; Science/Specialized knowledge (Biology) (6+5)11; Science/Specialized knowledge (Medicine) (6+10) 16, Science/Specialized knowledge (pharmacology) (6+5) 11; Science/Specialized knowledge (Physics/ chemistry) (6+5) 11.

LANGUAGES: Foreign language (Azuran) (6+0) 6; Native language (Neo-azuran) (Special) 16; Specialized language (Metalan) (6-3) 3.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations)(5+5) 10

TECHNIQUES: Computing (6+2) 8; First aid (5+14)19; Surgery (6+10) 16.

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Jodie Williams

AGE: 34

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"You just tighten this bit, twiddle this knob... and there you have it, all fixed."

Curious, tinkerer, stubborn

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

TECHNICIAN

BACKGROUND

Technology is great, as long as it's working properly.

And that's what your job is about. You are one of the most respected people under the seas. Most people make do with secondhand gear, but breakdowns can have dreadful consequences. Most of the time, nobody pays attention to you, but at the first hiccup, you become a living god. You've got to admit it's pretty cool!

You have chosen to be an exo-armor mechanic. Of course, you'd rather work on new gear and seeing it damaged pisses you off. However, you have no choice: like everyone else you have to salvage, fix, patch up... Nothing is every lost, and you become a true scavenger when you come across a wreck, salvaging badly needed spare parts. It's best not to get stranded in the middle of nowhere with no way to make repairs.

You were born in the Red League, in a medium-sized station. You have had a gift for mechanical work ever since you were a very young child. You have been a member of the Working-class for a while before leaving your nation to follow you dream: working in Equinox and getting to meet great people like Malgo Eight-Legs. You have bought a small workshop but you still need money and tools. To get them, there's nothing like working on the go... and looking for adventure.

ATTRIBUTES (2 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	11	12	15	12	12	16	10	9
N.A.*	1	1	2	1	1	3	1	0

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	12
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+0	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	-1
STUN THRESHOLD	11	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	21

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Middle-sized station, Working class, Self-taught

SAVINGS: 19,800 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Portable computer (TN 3, Gen. 4), Electronic toolkit TN 2 (+1), Mechanical toolkit TN 2 (+1), Dagger (augmented damage +1), Medium pistol (extended range +10%, augmented damage +2).

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 7; Allies or suppliers: 3; Adversaries: 3; Enemy: 0

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Natural weakness *(illness, +1 PC)*, **Workshop** *(10m²/Equipment level 1), assembly (improved weapons and gears)*, **Gear** *(96,000 Sols worth of repairs; 24,000 Sols used)*, **Fame** *(fame level 8 fame point 1)*, **Connections** *(+5 points)*, **Training** *(Armor Maneuvering (external exo-armor), 1CP)*, **Training** *(Armor Maneuvering (underwater exo-armor), 1CP)*, **Training** *(handguns, 1CP)*, **Training** *(Armed combat, 1CP)*, **Training** *(traps, 1CP)*

SKILLS (14 CP)

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (3+8) 11; Hand-to-hand combat (3+1) 4.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (3+5) 8.

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (6+1) 7; Cryptography (6+6) 12; Education/General knowledge (6+5) 11; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox) (6+5) 11; Knowledge of a nation (Red League, Origin) (6+8) 14; Science/Specialized knowledge (physics/chemistry) (6+7) 13.

LANGUAGES: Native language (Olakar) (Special) 15; Specific language (Neolan) (6+2) 8, Foreign language (Neo-azuran) (6+5) 11.

PILOTING: Piloting (underwater scooters) (2+1) 3; remote piloting (4+9) 13; Armor Maneuvering (underwater exo-armor) (3+6) 9, Armor Maneuvering (external exo-armor) (3+7) 10

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and Stations) (4+5) 9

TECHNIQUES: Armory (6+5) 11; Computing (6+6) 12; Electronics (6+7) 13; Mechanics (Exo-armors) (6+9) 15; Mechanics (Ships/Underwater Fighters) (6+8) 14; Mechanics (Generators/Life Support Systems) (6+8) 14; Security systems (6+7) 13, Traps (4+5) 9, Technical engineering (mechanics/Electronics) (6+5) 11

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NAME: Spencer Wilson

AGE: 33

QUOTE/PERSONALITY:

"Nope, this is mine, I found it on the ground."

Observant, discreet, smooth talker

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

THIEF

BACKGROUND

Every opportunity is worth taking.

The streets and the shadows are your playground. Born in the Equinox slums, you had to find a way to survive. Your natural abilities made you a gifted and daring burglar. There's always some new warehouse to visit and you have never had any problem fencing your merchandise. Secondhand gear is so common, nobody asks any questions.

You're still dreaming of the big score, the one that will make you very rich. To do that, you'll have to take risks, like break into a military warehouse or a research laboratory. All it needs is a little patience and a lot of planning. You're not like these idiots who get busted for stupid reasons; you take the time to plan your operations and gather intel on your marks. One day, you know it—it will make all the difference. Ok, so that last job might have been a little too risky. Now that you think about it, maybe, just maybe, you shouldn't have infiltrated that lab at Cortex... Now they're looking for you. Maybe it's time for you to go and see if the other stations of the underwater world have safes as well filled as the ones in Equinox. Besides, you've always had a taste for adventure!

ATTRIBUTES (6 CP)

	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WIL	PRE
BASE	10	10	16	16	14	16	11	10
N.A.*	1	1	3	3	2	3	1	1

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

LUCK	13	REACTION	15
MELEE DAMAGE MODIFIER	+0	DAMAGE RESISTANCE	+0
STUN THRESHOLD	10	KNOCKOUT THRESHOLD	20

** Natural Ability*

PRIOR EXPERIENCE: Major city, Slums, Delinquency/crime

SAVINGS: 67,000 Sols

PERSONAL GEAR: Cybernetic arm (strength 14), Stolen codebreaker (lvl. 10), Stolen computer (personal assistant, TN 3/Gen. 3), Goggles (light amplification), Knife, light pistol, Reinforced leather armor (full), Rope and grappling hook.

RELATIONSHIP: Contacts: 19; Allies or suppliers: 5; Adversaries: 9; Enemy: 2

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES/PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

Wanted *(Cortex/+3CP)*, **Mental disorder** *(Kleptomania/+1 CP)*, *Ambidextrous (1CP)*, **Fame** *(fame level 9)*, **Gear** *(22,000 Sols)*, **Smuggling network** *(level 4)*, **Hideout/cache** *x 2 (Equinox/ 5m² and 7 m²)*, **Performance** *x2*, **Criminal gang** *x2*, **Amenities, Smuggling network** *(level 4)*, **Training** *(Art/craftsmanship/1 CP)*, **Training** *(Computing/1CP)*

SKILLS (12 CP)

PHYSICAL ABILITIES: Acrobatics/Balance (6+5) 11; Climbing (4+5) 9.

COMBAT (MELEE): Armed combat (4+7) 11; Hand-to-hand combat (4+7) 11.

COMBAT (SHOOTING): Handguns (5+6) 11.

SOC. RELATIONSHIPS/COMMUNICATION: Intimidation (2+2) 4; Socializing/seduction (2+8) 10

KNOWLEDGE: Bureaucracy (6+4) 10; Business/Trafficking (Drugs) (4+6) 10; Business/Trafficking (fencing) (4+6) 10; Education/General Knowledge (6+4) 10; Finding information (6+2) 8; Gambling (4+8) 12; Knowledge of a nation (Equinox, orig.) (6+8) 14; Knowledge of an organization (Organized crime) (6+2) 8.

STEALTH/SUBTERFUGE: Camouflage/Concealment (5+3) 8; Discretion/Shadowing (5+0) 5; Escape (4+6) 10; Pickpocketing (6+10) 16; Stealth/Silent movement (5+5) 10.

LANGUAGES: Native language (Neo-azuran) (Special) 14; Specific language (Sirsian) (6+5) 11.

SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE: Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and stations) (6+5) 11; Observation (3+7) 10; Orientation (5+5) 10; Survival (4+6) 10.

TECHNIQUES: Art/craftsmanship (5+2) 7; Computing (6+3) 9; Electronics (6-1) 5; Forgery (5+6) 11; Security systems (6+4) 10.

MUTATIONS

Light deformities (+1 CP), Tail (1 CP)

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

CHAPTER 2.2

PROFESSIONS

Some are lucky to choose their job. Not everyone is fortunate that way. Most of the miners, workers, and farmers were born miners, workers, and farmers. I was born a diplomat, and today I'm a pirate; it just goes to show that you can never know how life will turn out. The pirates left me no choice, though; it was either that or go out the hatch!

— Statement by Olaf Gurz, from the Unicorn Fellowship

LIST OF PROFESSIONS

Here is the list of the Professions described in this chapter. Possible prerequisites are indicated where necessary.

Assassin page 157

Prerequisites: 3 years' experience as a Bounty Hunter, Mercenary, or Thief/Criminal, Soldier/Militiaman, Spy.

Bartender page 158

Bounty Hunter page 158

Prerequisites: 2 years' experience as a Mercenary, Police Officer/Investigator, Soldier, Watcher, or even... Thief/Criminal.

Craftsman/Artis page 159

Diplomat page 159

Prerequisites: Higher Education (Law or Political sciences).

Doctor/Surgeon page 160

Prerequisites: Higher Education (Medicine).

Elite Soldier page 160

Prerequisites: 3 years' experience as a Soldier/Militiaman. Additionally, two of the following Attributes must be at level 15 or above: Strengh, Constitution, Coordination, Adaptation and Willpower.

Farmer/Livestock Farmer page 162

Fighter Pilot page 162

Prerequisites: Higher Education (Naval School).

Mercenary page 163

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Military Officer	page 164

Prerequisites: Higher Education (Military school), or 15 years' experience as a Soldier/Militiaman or Techno-Hybrid, or 12 years' experience as an Elite Soldier or Watcher.

Miner	page 164
Naval Officer/Navigator	page 165

Prerequisites:
- *Merchant navy:* Higher Education (Naval school), or 15 years' experience as a Submariner.
- *Navy:* Higher Education (Naval school).

Pirate	page 166
Police Officer/Investigator	page 166
Priest of the Trident	page 167

This profession is available only if the GM agrees.

Scholar/Archaeologist	page 167

Prerequisites: Higher Education (Science/Humanities).

Scientist/Engineer	page 168

Prerequisites: Higher Education (Science/Humanities or Engineering).

Smuggler	page 169
Soldier/Militiaman	page 169
Spy	page 169

Prerequisites: 3 years' experience as a Diplomat, Mercenary, Police Officer/Investigator, Soldier/Militiaman, or Watcher.

Submariner	page 170
Technician/Mechanic	page 171
Techno-Hybrid	page 171

Prerequisites: Be a Techno-Hybrid.

Thief/Criminal	page 172
Trader	page 172
Traveling Trader/Storyteller	page 173
Trident Hybrid (Member of the S.I.G.)	page 174

Prerequisites: Be a Geno- or natural Hybrid.

Watcher	page 174
Worker/Longshoreman	page 175

DESCRIPTION

A character's Profession (he can have more than one) allows him to determine his background and career before the game starts, as well as the Skills he may have developed, his initial Fame, his wealth, etc. For more information on the use of Professions during character creation, see **Professions**, page 117.

Character's level of debt: Characters who do not get the automatic discount granted to some Professions can spend 1 Professional Advantage Point per year to reduce a potential debt by 1 to 5% per year with a maximum -25%. The Player will have to pay the sum owed during the campaign, and thus will have to meet the lender in order to pay him back a part each time! If the Player decides not to pay anymore (or cannot pay anymore), then the lender will try to get his property back after some time (at the discretion of the GM).

Assassin

Assassins are high-level professional killers, paid to do the dirty work... more or less discreetly.

Geographic Origin

An Assassin can come from any geographic region.

Prerequisites

3 years' experience as a Bounty Hunter, Spy, Mercenary, Soldier/Militiaman, or Thief/Criminal.

Professional Skills

- **Physical Abilities:** Acrobatics/Balance, Athletics, Climbing, Endurance.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial Arts (Defense techniques, Offense techniques, Wrestling).
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Sharpshooting, Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Empathic analysis, Eloquence/Persuasion, Intimidation.
- **Knowledge:** Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (choose one: Mercenaries, Organized Crime, Pirates, Smugglers), Science/Special Knowledge (Knowledge of poisons).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Discretion/Shadowing, Disguise/Deception, Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Solean.
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation.
- **Techniques:** Security systems, Spying/Surveillance, Traps.

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TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–3	Hitman	500 Sols/year
4–7	Assassin	1,000 Sols/year
8–9	Assassin	2,000 Sols/year
10–12	Assassin	4,000 Sols/year
13+	Cleaner	6,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/3 years
- **Opponents:** 1/year
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Corruption/Blackmail, Forgery, False Identity, Hideout/Cache, Fame, Connections, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Standard gear, Contact weapon, Handgun, Marksman rifle, Surveillance and security equipment, Poisons and drugs.

Bartender

They are the confidants of most sailors and know many people. Most of them are informants. The Bartender knows many things but doesn't speak much.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

Bartenders can work in any community that's big enough.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

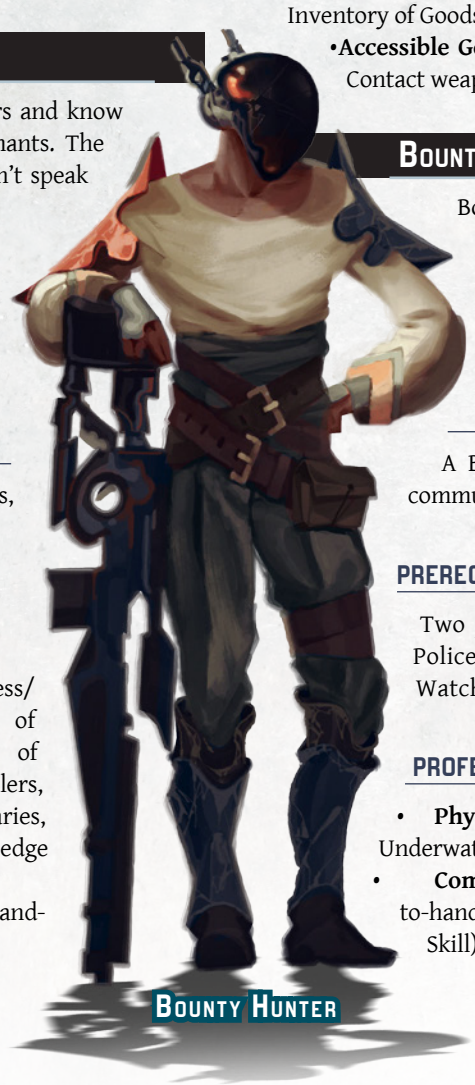
- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion, Empathic analysis, Intimidation, Socializing/Seduction.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Business/Trafficking, Gambling, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin or host community, Smugglers, Organized Crime, Mercenaries, Pirates), Science/Special Knowledge (Administration/Management).
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat.
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Solean, any foreign languages.
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–2	Apprentice	400 Sols/year
3–6	Bartender	800 Sols/year
7–14	Bartender	1D100x20 Sols/year
15+	Bartender	1D100x100 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 2/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/2 years
- **Opponents:** 1/4 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Bar, Inventory of Goods, Fame, Connections, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Standard gear, Bladed weapons, Contact weapons, Handguns.



Bounty Hunter

Bounty Hunters spend most of their time chasing Criminals, Pirates, Smugglers, or Fugitives. They above all rely on their skillfulness and their Adaptation abilities.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Bounty Hunter can come from any community.

PREREQUISITES

Two years' experience as a Mercenary, Police Officer/Investigator, Soldier, Watcher, or Criminal/Thief.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial Arts (choose one Skill).

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- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion, Empathic analysis, Intimidation.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (Organized Crime, Smugglers, Pirates, Police), Navigation.
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Discretion/Shadowing, Disguise/Deception, Security systems, Spying/Surveillance, Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Solean.
- **Piloting:** Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), Piloting (Light ships, Underwater scooters).
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation.
- **Techniques:** Soundscan analysis, First aid.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–6	Apprentice	500 Sols/year
7–8	Bounty Hunter	1,000 Sols/year
9–10	Bounty Hunter	2,000 Sols/year
11–14	Bounty Hunter	6,000 Sols/year
15–18	Bounty Hunter	8,000 Sols/year
19+	Bounty Hunter	12,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/2 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/4 years
- **Opponents:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (chosen by the GM).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Fame, Connections, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** exo-armor or a small underwater ship (on credit, debt reduced by 1–5% per year), Weapons, Armors and protection gear, Standard gear.

Craftsman/Artist

Craftsmen are similar to Traders, but they manufacture the products they sell or provide various services. Artists produce works of art.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Craftsman can come from any geographic region; although very few are from the Polar Alliance or from the Pirate Kingdoms. Artists are fewer; they can only be found in the biggest cities.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion, Socializing/Seduction.
- **Knowledge:** Business/Trafficking (Craftsmanship, Works of art...), Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin or host community), possibly Science/Special knowledge (related to the craft practiced; for instance Botany, Chemistry, etc.).
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Solean.
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation.
- **Techniques:** Art/Craftsmanship (choose one option).

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–2	Apprentice	50 Sols/year
3–6	Companion	1,500 Sols/year
7–12	Craftsman/Artist	15,000 Sols/year
13+	Master	30,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/2 years
- **Opponents:** 1/4 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Stall/Shop, Art/Craftsmanship, Fame, Connections, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Standard gear, Craftsmanship equipment.

Diplomat

Diplomats are usually very well respected individuals in a community. Their main task is to solve the conflicts that may arise between stations, and sometimes even nations.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Diplomat can come from any community.

PREREQUISITES

Higher Education: Law or Political sciences.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns.

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- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Empathic analysis, Eloquence/Persuasion, Socializing/Seduction
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Education/General knowledge, Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (choose three nations in addition to the Political background of his nation of origin), Science/Special knowledge (Political sciences).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Spying/Surveillance.
- **Languages:** language of the host community, Neo-azuran, Absolanese, choose one other language.
- **Special Skills:** Mind Shield.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–2	Student	1,000 Sols/year
3–8	Academic	2,000 Sols/year
9–12	Assistant	4,000 Sols/year
13–18	Diplomat	20,000 Sols/year
19+	Counselor	40,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/2 years
- **Opponents:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Fame, Connections, Corruption/Blackmail, Gear, Private Cabin.
- **Accessible Gear:** Translation and data storage drones, Standard gear, Intelligence and counter-intelligence equipment.

Doctor/Surgeon

Experts in treatments and diseases, doctors and surgeons are useful everywhere. Their training is usually provided by large pharmaceutical or genetics firms, or by the Priests of the Cult of the Trident.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Doctor can come from any community, but he will spend his first career years on large stations, such as Equinox or the capitals of underwater nations. The Player chooses a community or the GM chooses for him. It can be the community into which he was born. During his first career years, the character will have to practice in a major community. If he loses his job after the ninth year, it can mean he has been implicated in a scandal, has poorly treated or even unintentionally killed an important character, etc. People usually don't trust Doctors who are not from their own community. They are often suspected to be agents working for genetics laboratories or other organizations.

PREREQUISITES

Higher Education: Medicine

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Empathic analysis.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Education/General knowledge, Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community), Science/Special Knowledge (usually Medicine, but also Biology/Physiology, Cybertechnology, Genetics, Psychology/Psychiatry, etc., related to the specialty).
- **Languages:** Metalan, Azuran, Neo-azuran.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation
- **Techniques:** Computing, First aid, Surgery.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–6	Intern	200 Sols/year
7–12	Public Doctor	1,000 Sols/year
13–14	Private Doctor	4,000 Sols/year
15–16	First Category Doctor	8,000 Sols/year
17–18	Certified Doctor	12,000 Sols/year
19–20	Doctor	18,000 Sols/year
21+	Medical Expert	20,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/4 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/4 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear, Medical Database, Medical Practice, Personal Medicine Cabinet.
- **Accessible Gear:** Medical supplies, Standard gear, Drugs and poisons.

Elite Soldier

Elite Soldiers are members of expert military units. You have to choose a specialty:

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- Marine Commandos: experts in underwater exo-armor combat. These units are particularly famous in all the great armies of the world.
- Underground Commandos: soldiers trained in underground fighting are usually little-known by the population. They spend their lives in the bases near the Burrowers' territories.
- Surface Commandos: trained to fight on the surface, these soldiers are particularly sturdy and psychologically prepared to face the horrors of the ancient world. It's a very dangerous and particularly tough Profession.
- Special Forces: soldiers of the Special Forces are experts in fast and/or stealthy interventions (assassination, sabotage, infiltration, kidnapping, counter-terrorism...).

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

- **Marine Commandos:** a Marine Commando has to come from one of the large underwater nations.
- **Underground Commandos:** a character willing to be a member of the Underground Commandos must work in a community or country in contact with the Burrowers.
- **Surface Commandos:** this kind of Elite Soldier can only be a native of a nation or community with access to the surface.
- **Special Forces:** all the important nations have Special Forces. These Soldiers are, however, fewer in the more modest communities.

PREREQUISITES

Three years' experience as Soldier/Militiaman. Additionally, two of the following Attributes must be at Level 14 or above: Strength, Constitution, Coordination, Adaptation and Willpower.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance.
- *Marine commando:* Breathing, Underwater maneuvering.
- *Underground and surface commandos:* Climbing.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial arts (choose), Special weapons.
- *Marine commando:* Heavy weapons (melee).
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Heavy weapons (shooting), Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- *Surface commandos and Special Forces:* Sharpshooting.
- **Knowledge:** Cartography, Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community), Knowledge of social/professional environments (Army), Tactics (Special Ops).
- **Stealth:** Camouflage/Concealment, Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** Language of the host community, Neo-azuran.
- *Marine commando:* Sign language.
- **Piloting:** Remote piloting.
- *Marine commando:* Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), Piloting (Ground vehicles).
- *Underground commandos:* Armor maneuvering (External exo-armors), Piloting (Ground vehicles, Underground vehicles).
- *Surface commandos:* Armor maneuvering (atmospheric exo-armors, External exo-armors), Piloting (Ground vehicles).
- **Survival/Outside:** Observation, Orientation, Survival.
- *Marine commando:* Hunting/Tracking, Knowledge of an environment (Oceans)
- *Underground commandos:* Hunting/Tracking, Knowledge of an environment (underground).
- *Surface commandos:* Hunting/Tracking, Knowledge of an environment (Surface).
- **Techniques:** Explosives, First aid, Soundscan analysis.
- *Marine, underground, and surface commandos:* Traps.
- *Surface commandos:* Mechanics (Ground vehicles).
- *Special Forces:* Security systems, Spying/Surveillance.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

Marine Commandos/Special Forces

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1	Recruit	400 Sols/year
2–5	Soldier	800 Sols/year
6–7	Veteran	3,000 Sols/year
8–11	Sergeant	6,000 Sols/year
12+	Promotion to the rank of Lieutenant*	
** See the Military Officer Profession*		

Underground/Surface Commandos

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1	Recruit	500 Sols/year
2–5	Soldier	1,200 Sols/year
6–7	Veteran	3,600 Sols/year
8–11	Sergeant	7,500 Sols/year
12+	Promotion to the rank of Lieutenant *	
** See the Military Officer Profession*		

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:**
  - *Marine commandos:* 1/2 years
  - *Underground commandos:* 1/3 years
  - *Surface commandos:* 1/5 years
  - *Special Forces:* 1/2 years

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- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option)**:
  - *Marine commandos*: 1/4 years
  - *Underground commandos:* 1/5 years
  - *Surface commandos:* 1/6 years
  - *Special Forces:* 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:**
  - *Marine commandos*: 1/6 years
  - *Underground commandos:* 1/6 years
  - *Surface commandos:* 1/6 years
  - *Special Forces:* 1/6 years
- **Enemies**: 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy **(chosen by the GM).**
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Fame, Connections, Gear (including military gear).
- **Accessible Gear**: Standard gear, Melee weapons (free knife), Handgun (Pistol with free permit).
- *Marine commando:* Exo-alpha, exo-o or exo-1 underwater or hybrid exo-armor (free), Protections and armors.
- *Underground and surface commandos:* Exo-alpha, exo-o or exo-1 external or hybrid exo-armor (free), Protections and armors (one free simple protection).
- *Special Forces:* Protections and armors (one free simple protection).

Farmer/Livestock Farmer

Farmers work in the large underwater fields that spread around almost all the underwater communities. This Profession is as hard as being a Miner!

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Farmer/Livestock Farmer can come from any geographic region in the world. It's an extremely common Profession. The Player must pick a community for his character (or the GM imposes her choice).

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Endurance, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Empathic analysis.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin or host community), Science/Special Knowledge (Biology, Botany, Zoology).
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat.
- **Combat (shooting):** Bows, spearguns and crossbows.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Exonese.
- **Piloting:** Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), First aid, Piloting (Underwater scooters), Remote piloting.
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Oceans), Observation, Orientation, Survival.
- **Techniques:** Aquaculture/Farming, Computing, Craftsmanship (Cooking), Training.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1	Apprentice	100 Sols/year
2–9	Farm worker	1,000 Sols/year
10–11	Farming manager	1,500 Sols/year
12–13	Master livestock/ aquaculture farmer	2,000 Sols/year
14–15	Livestock/ aquaculture farmer	3,000 Sols/year
16–20	Livestock/ aquaculture farmer	4,000 Sols/year
21+	Manager of farming company	6,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/3 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/5 years
- **Opponents:** 1/5 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Land Lot/Farm, Fame, Connections, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Underwater exo-armors (on credit, debt reduced by 1–5% per year), Standard gear, Aquaculture and Farming gear (drones, armors, vehicles, etc.).

Fighter Pilot

Fighter Pilots form an elite force inside the armed forces of a community or a nation. Their training always starts in the naval or ground forces but can be continued as Mercenary. The character must choose a specialty:

- Underwater fighter vessel pilot
- Atmospheric fighter pilot

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Pilot can come from any geographical area but he has to start his training as a recruit in the army of a big nation.

PREREQUISITES

Higher Education (Naval school).

Evlen Riley Ramirez (Order #6797870)

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance.
- *Underwater fighter vessel pilot:* FOF breathing.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat.
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns.
- **Knowledge:** Cartography, Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community), Navigation.
- *Atmospheric fighter pilot:* Tactics (Ground combat).
- *Underwater fighter vessel pilot:* Tactics (Naval combat).
- **Languages:** Language of the host community, Neo-azuran, Sign language.
- **Piloting:** Remote piloting.
- *Atmospheric fighter pilot:* Armor Maneuvering (atmospheric exo-armors), Armor Maneuvering (External exo-armors), Piloting (Atmospheric fighters).
- *Underwater fighter vessel pilot:* Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), Piloting (Underwater fighter vessels, Ground vehicles, Light ships).
- **Survival/Outside:** Orientation, Observation
- *Atmospheric fighter pilot:* Knowledge of an environment (Surface).
- *Underwater fighter vessel pilot:* Knowledge of an environment (Oceans).
- **Techniques:** Computing, Electronics, Mechanics (Atmospheric fighters or Underwater fighter vessels), Onboard Weapons/Artillery, Soundscan analysis.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1	Recruit	800 Sols/year
2–5	Soldier	1,600 Sols/year
6–7	Veteran	6,000 Sols/year
8–11	Sergeant	12,000 Sols/year
12–15	Lieutenant	20,000 Sols/year
16+	Captain	36,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/2 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/6 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear (including military gear).
- **Accessible Gear:** Handguns (Pistol with free permit), Melee weapons (free knife), Protections and armors, Standard gear, light second hand fighter (if Game Master agrees; on credit, debt reduced by 1–5% per year)

MERCENARY

This Profession is getting more and more common at the bottom of the seas. There is a lot of competition and only a few can make a name for themselves. A Mercenary's main job involves defending small communities.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Mercenary can come from any community.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance, FOF breathing, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Intimidation.
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community, Mercenaries), Navigation, Tactics (Special Ops).
- **Combat (melee):** any skill.
- **Combat (shooting):** any skill.
- **Stealth:** Camouflage/Concealment, Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** language of the host community.
- **Piloting:** Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), Piloting (Light Ships, Underwater Scooters), Remote piloting.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation, Orientation, Survival, Traps.
- **Techniques:** Explosives, First Aid, Soundscan Analysis.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–6	Mercenary	500 Sols/year
7–8	Sergeant	1,000 Sols/year
9–10	Sergeant	2,000 Sols/year
11–14	Sergeant	4,000 Sols/year
15–18	Lieutenant	8,000 Sols/year
19+	Captain	12,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/2 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Exo-alpha, exo-0 ou exo-1 exo-armor or small underwater ship (on credit, debt

Fabien Riley Kiavatier (Order #6797870)

reduced by 1 to 5% per year), Armors and protection gear, Standard gear, Weapons.

Military Officer

Military officers are trained in military schools. Experts in commanding troops and implementing tactics, they are usually less prone to direct action than soldiers.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A character commissioned soon after enlistment as a Military officer has to come from one of the large underwater nations. Officers from small communities are former soldiers promoted from the ranks (unless they are Mercenaries... or deserters).

PREREQUISITES

Higher Education (Military school) or 15 years' experience as a Soldier/Militiaman or Techno-Hybrid, or 12 years' experience as an Elite Soldier or Watcher.

At the start of his career, a Military officer is only supposed to command regular outdoor and underwater operations. After 2 years' experience as a Lieutenant, he may aspire to command operations on hostile ground (or remain in regular operations). He must however choose a specialty: underground or Surface.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial arts.
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Heavy weapons (shooting), Shoulder fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Intimidation, Leadership.
- **Knowledge:** Cartography, Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community), Knowledge of social/professional environments (Army), Tactics (choose any), Strategy.
- *Operations on hostile ground (Surface):* Satellite weapons.
- **Stealth:** Stealth/Silent movement.
- *Operations on hostile ground:* Camouflage/Concealment.
- **Languages:** Native language, language of the host community, one other language to choose (especially a language from friendly or enemy countries).
- **Piloting:** Armor Maneuvering (External exo-armors), Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-Armors), Piloting (Ground vehicles).
- *Operations on hostile ground (underground):* Piloting (Underground vehicles).
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Oceans), Observation, Orientation, Survival.
- *Operations on hostile ground (underground):* Knowledge of an environment (underground).
- *Operations on hostile ground (Surface):* Knowledge of an environment (Surface).
- **Techniques:** Explosives, Soundscan analysis.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

Regular Units

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–5	Officer cadet *	4,000 Sols/year
6–11	Lieutenant *	6,000 Sols/year
12+	Captain	10,000 Sols/year
** Officers who started as enlisted men are directly promoted to Lieutenant.*		

Elite Units

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–5	Officer cadet *	12,000 Sols/year
6–11	Lieutenant *	18,000 Sols/year
12+	Captain	30,000 Sols/year
** Officers who came up through the ranks are directly promoted to Lieutenant.*		

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- Contacts: 1/2 years
- Allies or Suppliers (pick one option): 1/4 years
- Adversaries: 1/6 years
- Enemies: The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (chosen by the GM).
- Professional Advantages (5 points/year): Connections, Fame, Gear (including military gear).
- Accessible Gear: Handguns (Pistol with free permit), Protections and armors, Standard gear.

Miner

Miners lead especially difficult lives. They spend their days in the deepest underwater mines, extracting precious ores.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Miner can come from any part of the world. It's one of the most common Professions at the bottom of the seas.

Evlen Riley Kasmer (Order #6797870)

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Climbing, Endurance, FOF Breathing, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Heavy weapons (melee).
- **Combat (shooting):** Bows, spearguns and crossbows, Heavy weapons (shooting).
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin or host community).
- **Languages:** Native language, language of the host community, Klanese.
- **Piloting:** Armor Maneuvering (External exo-armors), Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), Piloting (Surface vehicles, Underground vehicles), Remote piloting.
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Oceans, Underground), Survival.
- **Techniques:** Explosives, Mechanics (Ground vehicles, Underground vehicles).

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–2	Apprentice Miner	500 Sols/year
3–6	Miner	1,000 Sols/year
7–8	First Category Miner	2,000 Sols/year
9–10	Class A Miner	3,000 Sols/year
11–12	Class B Miner	4,000 Sols/year
13–18	Class C Miner	5,000 Sols/year
19–20	Expert Miner	8,000 Sols/year
21+	Mine Master	12,000 Sols/year

MINER

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/2 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/6 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear, Mining claim.
- **Accessible Gear:** exo-armor (on credit: debt reduced by 1 to 5% per year), Standard gear.

NAVAL OFFICER/NAVIGATOR

Naval officers are experts at piloting large ships and at deep-sea navigation. The Player must choose a specialty:

- Merchant Navy
- Navy

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

Naval officers and Navigators can come from any community. They are, however, trained by the merchant fleet or the navy of a large nation.

PREREQUISITES

- **Merchant Navy:** Higher Education (Naval school) or 15 years' experience as a Submariner.
- **Navy:** Higher Education (Naval school).

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Endurance, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns.
- **Communication/ Social Relationships:** Leadership.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/ organizations (choose which), Navigation, Tactics (Naval combat).
- **Languages:** Language of the host community, Neo-azuran, Solean, and one other language of the Player's choice.
- **Piloting:** Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), Piloting (Ground vehicles, Heavy ships, Light ships).
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Oceans), Observation, Orientation.
- **Techniques:** Soundscan analysis, Onboard Weapons/ Artillery.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–5	Midshipman *	12,000 Sols/year
6–11	Lieutenant *	20,000 Sols/year
12+	Captain	36,000 Sols/year
** Officers who come up through the ranks are directly promoted to Lieutenant.*		

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PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/2 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/6 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear (including military gear).
- **Accessible Gear:** Handguns (Pistol with free permit), Protections and armors, Standard gear, small civilian ship or corvet or patroller (if Game Master agrees; second hand ship; on credit, debt reduced by 1–5% per year)

PIRATE

The character is member of a pirate fellowship. He can freely choose to be a buccaneer, a freebooter, a pirate, etc.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

Either the character was born into a pirate community or he has been captured by freebooters and had no other choice than to join them. Changing Profession or losing his job means the PC has left piracy or has changed fellowship. He can't decide to leave this Profession for another one as long as he hasn't been fired.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Acrobatics/Balance, Climbing, FOF breathing, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial Arts (Wrestling, Offense techniques).
- **Combat (shooting):** Bows, spearguns and crossbows, Handguns, Shoulder fired weapons/Rifles, Throwing weapons.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Intimidation.
- **Knowledge:** Gambling, Knowledge of nations/organizations (Pirate nations), Navigation, Tactics (Special Ops).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Ithraxian.
- **Piloting:** Armor Maneuvering (external exo-armors, Underwater exo-armors), Piloting (light ships, underwater scooters), Remote piloting,
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Oceans), Observation, Orientation, Survival.
- **Techniques:** Electronics, Mechanics (exo-armors, ships/underwater fighters), Explosives, Soundscan analysis, Traps, Onboard Weapons/Artillery.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–6	Ship's Boy	2D100 Sols/year
7–16	Pirate	1D10 x 100 Sols/year
17+	Pirate	1D100 x 100 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/2 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connection, Corruption/Blackmail, Fame, Gear.

Accessible Gear: Exo-alpha or exo-0 armor, underwater or hybrid exo-armor (free), Sabre (free), All kinds of gear (stolen, of course!), Small transport ship, (on credit, debt reduced by 1–5% per year),

POLICE OFFICER/INVESTIGATOR

Whether he works as a police officer in an official service or as an agent for a private firm, the character is an expert at investigation and shadowing.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

The character may come from any community.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial Arts (Wrestling, Defense techniques, Offense techniques).
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Empathic analysis, Intimidation, Leadership.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Education/General knowledge, Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community, Organized crime, etc.), Science/Special Knowledge (Knowledge of drugs, Law).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Discretion/Shadowing, Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Solean.
- **Survival/Outside:** Hunting/tracking; Knowledge of an environment (underwater cities and Stations), Observation, Orientation.
- **Techniques:** Computing, First aid, Security systems, Spying/Surveillance.

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TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1	Recruit	200 Sols/year
2–5	Police officer	800 Sols/year
6–7	Police officer	2,400 Sols/year
8–11	Detective	5,000 Sols/year
12–15	Lieutenant	12,000 Sols/year
16+	Captain	20,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Corruption/Blackmail, Databases, Fame, Gears.
- **Accessible Gear:** Firearms (Pistol with free permit), Protections and armors (One free simple protection), Standard gear.

Priest of the Trident

Priests of the Trident are the most respected and the most feared individuals at the bottoms of the seas. Diplomats, doctors, counselors, researchers: they can be found in every field. The Cult of the Trident is inexorably intertwined with the mysterious Polaris Effect. However, one need not be Polaris sensitive to belong to it. **This profession is available only with the GM's agreement.**

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A PC wishing to be a Priest of the Trident can come from any station, but he will be trained on Equinox.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Martial arts (defensive techniques).
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion, Empathic analysis, Leadership.
- **Knowledge:** Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community (or Equinox), Cult of the Trident), Science/Special Knowledge (related to the Priest's specialty, usually: Administration/Management, Medicine, Political sciences Psychology).
- **Languages:** Language of the host community, Absolanese, Inesisian, Neo-azuran.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation
- **Techniques:** First aid.
- **Special Skills:** Body control, Meditation, Mind Shield, Mastery of the Polaris Echo, Mastery of the Polaris Effect (starting only in the third year) and one Polaris Effect power every 5 years of experience (3 powers at most, and only if the character is able to use the Polaris Effect).

Note: if the Priest can use the Polaris Effect, he can, on the third year, spend Skill Points in the Mastery of the Polaris Effect as if it was a Professional Skill.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–2	Novice	100 Sols/year
3–8	Initiate	500 Sols/year
9–12	Postulant	2,000 Sols/year
13+	Priest assistant	6,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/3 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option)**: 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/4 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear, Private Cabin.
- **Accessible Gear:** Bladed weapons, Computer hardware, Standard gear.

Scholar/Archaeologist

Scholars dedicate themselves to all kinds of research. They are specialists of contemporary and ancient history. They also master many written and spoken languages.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

Scholars mostly work in the big nations of the underwater world. There are extremely few of them in small communities.

PREREQUISITES

Higher Education: Science/Humanities.

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PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion.
- **Knowledge:** Cartography, Cryptography, Education/General knowledge, Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin or host community), Navigation, Science/Special knowledge (choose from Archaeology, Geography, History, etc.).
- **Languages:** choose any.
- **Techniques:** Computing, Soundscan analysis.
- **Special Skills:** Meditation, Mind Shield.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–2	Student	1,000 Sols/year
3–6	Academic	2,000 Sols/year
7–12	Assistant	4,000 Sols/year
13+	Scholar	14,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/2 years
- **Opponents:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Private Cabin, Gear, Database.
- **Accessible Gear:** Standard gear, Translation and data storage drones, Computer hardware.

SCIENTIST/ENGINEER

Experts in scientific research or the conception of machines and technological equipment, these characters are overindulged by large nations and firms. However, a field of research or activity has to be chosen.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

The character can have any origin, but he must have studied and spent the first years of his career in a large nation.

PREREQUISITES

Higher Education (Science/Humanities or Engineering school).

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion.
- **Knowledge:** Cryptography, Education/General knowledge, Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (to choose), Science/Special Knowledge (to choose, related to the field of research or activity).
- **Languages:** Metalan, Neo-azuran, Neolan.
- **Techniques:** Computing, Electronics, Mechanics, Technical Engineering (to choose, related to the field of research or activity) and any other Skill useful to the field of the character.
- **Special Skills:** Mind Shield.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–6	Intern	200 Sols/year
7–12	PhD student	1,000 Sols/year
13–14	Researcher	4,000 Sols/year
15–16	Project manager	8,000 Sols/year
17–18	Certified scientist	12,000 Sols/year
19–20	Head of research	18,000 Sols/year
21+	Expert	20,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/2 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Databases, Fame, Gear, Private Cabin.
- **Accessible Gear:** Computer hardware, Standard gear, Translation and data storage drone.

Evlen Riley Kasmer (Order #6797870)

Smuggler

Specialized in trafficking of all kinds of goods, Smugglers are crucial to the continuation of the black market.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Smuggler can come from any community. It's up to the PC to decide where he will perform his nefarious activities.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat.
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion, Intimidation.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Knowledge of nations/organizations (Smugglers, Organized Crime, Pirates), Business/Trafficking (choose one, usually illegal goods), Navigation.
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Camouflage/Concealment.
- **Languages:** language of the host community, Neo-azuran, Solean.
- **Piloting:** Piloting (Light ships, Underwater scooters).
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation
- **Techniques:** Soundscan analysis, Forgery (to be used with Bureaucracy).

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–6	Smuggler	1D6 x 100 Sols/year
7+	Smuggler	1D100 x 100 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (choose one option):** 1/3 years
- **Opponents:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy **(chosen by the GM)**.
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Fame, Connections, Forgery, Smuggling Network, Hideout/Cache, Inventory of Goods, Corruption/Blackmail, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Small transport ship, (on credit, debt reduced by 1–5% per year), Shoulder-fired weapon, Handgun, Contact weapon.

Soldier/Militiaman

Soldier is one the riskiest Professions . A PC may be a member of the army of a big nation or be a Militiaman in a small community.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Soldier can come from any region of the world.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Climbing, Endurance.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial arts (choose), Special weapons (choose).
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Heavy weapons (shooting), Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Intimidation, Leadership.
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community), Tactics (Special Ops).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Stealth/Silent movement.
- **• Languages:** language of the host community.
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation, Orientation.
- **Techniques:** Explosives, First aid.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1	Recruit	100 Sols/year
2–5	Soldier	400 Sols/year
6–7	Veteran	1,200 Sols/year
8–14	Sergeant	2,500 Sols/year
15+	Promotion to the rank of Lieutenant*	
** See the Military Officer Profession*		

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/3 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option)**: 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/5 years
- **Enemies**: 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy **(chosen by the GM).**
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Fame, Connections, Gear (including military gear).
- **Accessible Gear**: Handgun (Pistol with free permit), Melee weapons (free knife), Protections and armors (one free simple protection), Standard gear.

Spy

Secret agents are everywhere in the *Polaris RPG* universe. There isn't even a need to be trained to gather intel. The Spy occupation includes all active and trained intelligence agents who are part of an organization, such as the Prism (the Hegemonian secret services).

Eden Riley Klavatter (Order #6797870)

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Spy inevitably comes from the country for which he spies. The choice is important since it will directly affect the PC's future. A Spy also chooses the country or community in which he will work.

PREREQUISITES

3 years' experience as a Diplomat, Mercenary, Police Officer/Investigator, Soldier/Militiaman, or Watcher.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Acrobatics/Balance, Athletics, Climbing.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial Arts (Wrestling, Defense techniques, Offense techniques).
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion, Empathic analysis, Intimidation, Socializing/Seduction.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Cryptography, Education/General knowledge, Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, field of operation, another Skill to choose).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Camouflage/Concealment, Discretion/Shadowing, Disguise/Deception, Escape, Pickpocketing, Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** language of the host community (field of operation), Enefid, Neo-azuran, choose one other language (except Arkonian).
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation, Orientation.
- **Techniques:** Computer hacking, Computing, Forgery (to be used with Bureaucracy), Security systems, Spying/Surveillance.
- **Special Skills:** Mind Shield.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–6	Novice	600 Sols/year
7+	Spy	6,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/3 years
- **Opponents:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Corruption/Blackmail, Forgery, False Identity, Hideout/Cache, Fame, Connection, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Standard gear, Contact weapon, Handgun, Surveillance and security equipment, Forgery gear.

Note on the Spy's Fame: as long as he has not been made, a Spy collects Fame Points inside his service and under his Spy identity. He will not be known as a person, but under his secret identity with a code name. He may also, if he wishes to, distribute his Fame Points between his false identities.

SUBMARINER

Submariners form the crews of fishing ships, military vessels, and merchant ships. They spend most of their time at sea, their only contact with civilization being in harbors. These people are friendly... but ready for a fight. They are fascinated by the ocean that they see as a living entity. Sailors are superstitious and often tell the most unbelievable tales.

SUBMARINER

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

These sailors can come from any community.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Endurance, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat.
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Knowledge:** Gambling, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, commercial harbors), Navigation.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Solean.
- **Piloting:** Armor maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), Piloting (Heavy Ships, Light ships, Underwater scooters), Remote piloting.
- **Survival/Outside:** Hunting/Tracking (crew of the fishing ships only), Knowledge of an

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environment (Oceans), Observation, Orientation, Survival.
- **Techniques:** Onboard weapons/Artillery, Soundscan analysis.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–2	Ship's Boy	500 Sols/year
3–7	Submariner	1,500 Sols/year
8–14	Quartermaster	3,000 Sols/year
15+	Skipper * *Promotion to the rank of Lieutenant* **	4,000 Sols/year

** Small fishing or transport ships.*
*** Military vessels or merchant ships only. ** See the Naval Officer/Navigator Profession*

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option)**: 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/3 years
- **Enemies**: 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy **(chosen by the GM).**
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear**: Fishing gear, Small fishing or transport ship (crew of small civilian ships only; ship on credit: debt reduced by 1 to 5% per year), Standard gear.

Technician/Mechanic

Technicians are the most respected people at the bottom of the seas, since they are the ones who fix the installations and devices. A good Technician always finds work to do and his reputation grows rapidly. You must choose a specific field (for instance, mechanics, computing, etc.).

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

Technicians can be natives of any community.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Knowledge:** Cryptography (for the security experts), Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community), Science/Special knowledge (related to the field, for instance, Chemistry, Geology, Physics, etc.).
- **Languages:** language of the host community, Neolan.
- **Piloting:** Remote piloting.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation
- **Techniques:** related to the field, for instance, Computer hacking (for the computer security experts), Computing, Electronics, Mechanics (choose any), etc., Security systems

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–7	Apprentice	500 Sols/year
8–13	Independent technician	1,500 Sols/year
14–15	Class A Technician	3,000 Sols/year
16–17	Class B Technician	6,000 Sols/year
18–19	Certified Technician	8,000 Sols/year
20–21	Expert	12,000 Sols/year
22+	Master Technician	20,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/2 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option)**: 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/4 years
- **Enemies**: 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy **(chosen by the GM).**
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear, Workshop, Assembly.
- **Accessible Gear**: Standard gear, Gear related to the character's Profession.

Techno-Hybrid

Techno-Hybrids are the result of Hegemonian science. Horribly deformed by the implants that allow them to breathe underwater, they form one of the most feared combat groups in the oceans.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Techno-Hybrid can only be Hegemonian.

PREREQUISITES

Be a Techno-Hybrid!

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance, Underwater maneuvering.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Heavy weapons (Melee), Martial arts (Wrestling).

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- **Combat (shooting):** Special weapons (hybrid wrist launcher), choose another weapon Skill.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Intimidation.
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge of nations/organizations (Hegemony, Hegemonian Army), Tactics (Special Ops)
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** Exonese, Neo-azuran, Sign language.
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Oceans), Observation, Orientation, Survival.
- **Special Skills:** Hybrid.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1	Recruit	100 Sols/year
2–5	Soldier	400 Sols/year
6–7	Veteran	1,200 Sols/year
8–11	Sergeant	2,500 Sols/year
12–14	Major	6,000 Sols/year
15+	Promotion to the rank of Lieutenant *	12,000 Sols/year
** See the Military Officer Profession*		

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/8 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option)**: 1/10 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/10 years
- **Enemies**: 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy **(chosen by the GM).**
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear (including military gear).
- **Accessible Gear**: Bladed weapons (free knife), Handguns (Pistol with free permit), Hybrid wrist weapon (free), Protections and armors (one free simple protection), Standard gear.

Thief/Criminal

Thieves and petty criminals are numerous in the slums of the big underwater cities. They can rarely be found in small communities. They usually work for local crime lords.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

These characters inevitably live in the large underwater cities, particularly in the commercial harbors.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Acrobatics/Balance, Climbing.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat.
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Intimidation, Socializing/Seduction.
- **Knowledge:** Business/Trafficking (usually Drugs, Weapons, Stolen gear, etc.), Finding information, Gambling, Knowledge of nations/organizations (Smugglers, Organized crime), Science/Special knowledge (Knowledge of poisons).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Camouflage/Concealment, Discretion/Shadowing, Escape, Pickpocketing, Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Sirsian.
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation, Orientation, Survival.
- **Techniques:** Forgery, Security systems.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–3	Lookout	1D10 x 100 Sols/year
4–6	Thief/Criminal	1D10 x 300 Sols/year
7–10	Thief/Criminal	1D10 x 500 Sols/year
11–15	Gang leader	7,000 Sols/year
16–20	Gang leader	12,000 Sols/year
21+	Crime lord	20,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option)**: 1/4 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/year
- **Enemies**: 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy **(chosen by the GM).**
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Hideout/cache, Fame, Forgery, Gear, Smuggling network.
- **Accessible Gear**: a little of everything... but it's always stolen or secondhand gear, which may sometimes prove problematic.

Trader

Here's a Profession that allows traveling in every sea and every ocean!

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Trader can come from any geographic region, although very few come from the Polar Alliance or the Pirate Kingdoms. The Player chooses a community of birth for

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his character (or the GM imposes her choice). He then chooses the community where he will work. A character may at any time decide to move to another community to work there.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat.
- **Communication/ Social Relationships:** Empathic analysis, Eloquence/Persuasion, Socializing/Seduction.
- **Knowledge:** Bureaucracy, Business/Trafficking (choose one), Education/General knowledge, Finding information, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community, Smugglers), Science/Special knowledge (Administration/Management, Economy, other Science/Special knowledge related to the products sold).
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Solean.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation
- **Techniques:** Forgery

Any other Skill related to the products sold may also be adapted, with the GM's agreement.

Traveling Trader

- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Stall/Shop, Inventory of Goods, Fame, Connections, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Standard gear.

Traveling Trader/ Storyteller

Many Traveling Traders are Storytellers too; they are in fact a kind of underwater bard who travels from one community to another. They earn a living by selling goods, giving shows, and most of all by telling the latest news to members of isolated communities. They are also amazing narrators, and they usually have a vivid imagination. They never have a lot of money and usually enjoy the hospitality of small communities.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

Traveling Traders can come from any community of the underwater world. On the other hand, they mostly visit the small isolated communities.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–5	Clerk	100 Sols/year
6–7	Dealer Apprentice	1,000 Sols/year
8–11	Trader	2,000 Sols/year
12–15	Trader	4,000 Sols/year
16–19	Trader	6,000 Sols/year
20–23	Trader	12,000 Sols/year
24–26	Trader	20,000 Sols/year
27+	Trader	30,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/2 years
- **Opponents:** 1/4 years

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Empathic analysis, Eloquence/Persuasion, Socializing/Seduction, Artistic expression (choose one, usually Tale, Music, etc.).
- **Knowledge:** Cartography, Business/Trafficking (choose one, usually Common gear), Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/organizations (choose one), Navigation.
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Disguise/Deception, Pickpocketing.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran, Solean, choose another common language.
- **Piloting:** Piloting (Light ships).
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation
- **Techniques:** Craftsmanship (for instance, Production of drugs, ointments...), First aid, Soundscan analysis.

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TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1-2	Travelling trader	1d6 x 500 sols/year
3-4	Travelling trader	1d10 x 500 sols/year
5-8	Travelling trader	1 d10 x 1,000 sols/year
9+	Travelling trader	1d10 x 2,000 sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 2/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/year
- **Opponents:** 1/2 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear, Inventory of Goods.
- **Accessible Gear:** Small transport ship (on credit, debt reduced by 1–5% per year), Standard gear.

Trident Hybrid (Member of the S.I.G.)

The character inevitably starts in Equinox in the S.I.G. service of the Cult of the Trident.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

The character can come from any community, but he works on Equinox.

PREREQUISITES

Be a Geno- or Natural-Hybrid!

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance, Underwater maneuvering (but this Skill can be replaced by *Hybrid*, see the section **2. Genetic Type of the Character** in the chapter **Building a Character**, page 104).
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial arts (Wrestling).
- **Combat (shooting):** choose one Weapon Skill.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Empathic analysis.
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge of nations/organizations (Equinox, Cult of the Trident, community of origin, Watchers), Tactics (Special Ops).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Escape, Stealth/Silent movement.
- **Languages:** Inesisian, Exonese, Sign language.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Oceans), Observation, Orientation, Survival.
- **Special Skills:** Hybrid.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1+	Hybrid	1,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/4 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/5 years
- **Opponents:** 1/5 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents may be exchanged for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Fame, Connections, Gear.
- **Accessible Gear:** Standard gear, Diving equipment.

Watcher

Watcher

Watchers are the soldiers of the Cult of the Trident and of the S.M.S.O. They are first and foremost an international police force in charge of protecting the interests of the Trident and of the small underwater communities. A Watcher is usually a polite and devoted person (at least he appears to be).

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

Most Watchers are trained on Equinox. They can come from anywhere.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Athletics, Endurance.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Martial arts (Defense techniques, Offense techniques).
- **Combat (shooting):** Handguns, Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles.
- **Communication/Social Relationships:** Eloquence/Persuasion, Intimidation, Leadership.

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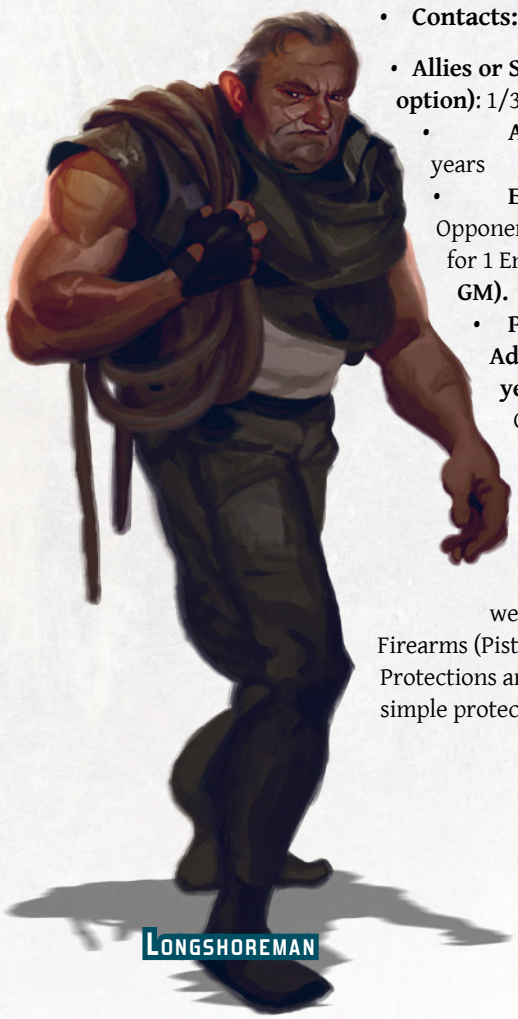
- **Knowledge:** Education/General knowledge, Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community, Equinox, Watchers, Cult of the Trident), Tactics (Special Ops).
- **Stealth/Subterfuge:** Discretion/Shadowing.
- **Languages:** Neo-azuran
- **Survival/Outside:** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation, Orientation.
- **Techniques:** First aid.

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1	Recruit	200 Sols/year
2–5	Soldier	800 Sols/year
6–7	Veteran	2,400 Sols/year
8–11	Sergeant	5,000 Sols/year
12+	*Promotion to the rank of Lieutenant **	
** See the Military Officer Profession*		

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/2 years
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/3 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/4 years
- **Enemies:** 3 Opponents can be exchanged for 1 Enemy **(chosen by the GM).**
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/ year):** Connections, Corruption/ Blackmail, Fame, Gear, Private Cabin (on Equinox),.
- **Accessible Gear:** Bladed weapons (free knife), Firearms (Pistol with free permit), Protections and armors (One free simple protection), Standard gear.



LONGSHOREMAN

WORKER/LONGSHOREMAN

Workers, just like Miners, have a tough job. What's worse is that they're more poorly paid. On the other hand, they have the enormous advantage of really knowing the stations where they work and having many friends.

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN

A Worker can come from any part of the world. It's one of the most common Professions at the bottom of the seas.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

- **Physical Abilities:** Endurance, FOF breathing.
- **Combat (melee):** Armed combat, Hand-to-hand combat, Heavy weapons (melee).
- **Knowledge:** Knowledge of nations/organizations (community of origin, host community).
- **Piloting:** Armor Maneuvering (External exo-armors), Armor Maneuvering (Underwater exo-armors), Remote piloting.
- **Survival/Outside :** Knowledge of an environment (Underwater cities and stations), Observation
- **Languages:** language of the host community, Neo-azuran.
- **Techniques:** Mechanics (Generators/Life support systems, or any kind of Skill related to the character's field).

TITLES AND INCOME GROWTH

YEARS	TITLE	SAVINGS
1–2	Apprentice	300 Sols/year
3–6	Class A Worker	500 Sols/year
7–8	Class B Worker	1,000 Sols/year
9–10	Class C Worker	2,000 Sols/year
11–12	Class D Worker	3,000 Sols/year
13–18	Skilled Worker	4,000 Sols/year
19–20	Expert Worker	5,000 Sols/year
21+	Master Worker	8,000 Sols/year

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

- **Contacts:** 1/year
- **Allies or Suppliers (pick one option):** 1/2 years
- **Adversaries:** 1/4 years
- **Enemies:** The Player may exchange 3 Opponents for 1 Enemy (**chosen by the GM**).
- **Professional Advantages (5 points/year):** Connections, Fame, Gear, this Profession automatically gets the Solidarity Advantage
- **Accessible Gear:** Standard gear.

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CONNECTIONS AND ADVERSARIES

CONTACTS, SUPPLIERS, AND ALLIES

A character is supported by contacts and acquaintances who may help him. They specifically include:

- **Contacts:** these are acquaintances (usually not very influential) who can give information to the character, sell him small equipment, or do him some small favors (non-dangerous ones), but who won't do much more. Contacts expect to be paid in exchange of their services.
- **Suppliers:** these people can supply the character with important gear ("supply" meaning "sell," of course). It can also be valuable information or other kinds of important services. The character can get much more from his Suppliers than from his Contacts, if he pays the right price...
- **Allies** are relatives, friends, or supporters of the character. They may not be significant people, but they are reliable connections, always ready to help if need be (and for free).

Of course, Contacts, Suppliers, and Allies expect to be treated well. Occasionally, Suppliers may even give small assignments to the character or become special middlemen. Contacts and Suppliers can definitely betray a character if that's in their best interests (or in the Gamemaster's interest). As for Allies, they are completely loyal, but they expect the character to lend them a hand, just as they do for him. This can lead to interesting scenarios...

At the beginning of the game, each character automatically gets a Contact and an Ally. During his career, he then regularly gains Contacts, as well as Allies and Suppliers (he may choose which one each time). Finally, he may gain **Connection Points** through his Professional Advantages. These points will help him buy new Contacts, Suppliers, or Allies, at the following costs:

- **Contact:** 1 Connection Point.
- **Supplier or Ally:** 3 Connection Points.

Connection Points may also be used to improve a Contact, a Supplier, or an Ally, **but only with the GM's agreement**. Here are the possible Improvements:

- **Influential Person:** 3 Connection Points for a Contact or a Supplier, 5 Points for an Ally. The individual in question is an important person; for instance a politician, a high-ranked officer, etc.
- **Group/Gang:** 3 Connection Points for a Contact or a Supplier, 5 Points for an Ally. The individual is, in fact, at the head of a group of people or a gang.

In both cases, information or services will be more interesting, but the price to pay will be higher, as well as the indirect consequences for the character. It's possible to improve a Contact, a Supplier, or an Ally automatically obtained and even to buy the two Improvements for one individual. The GM shouldn't, however, allow a character to have more than one individual of this kind among his acquaintances, and for his part, the Player must give a credible reason to explain it.

The Player may choose where his character's Connections live, as well as their specialty or work. You need not determine the specifics for all these individuals during character creation, but with the GM's agreement it can be done later during the campaign. During his adventures, a character may definitely meet other Contacts, Suppliers, or Allies.

ADVERSARIES AND ENEMIES

Unlike Connections, opponents will do everything they can to stand in the way of the characters:

- **Adversaries** are rivals, competitors, or people jealous of the PC. They will do anything to harm him: harassing him, informing on his every move to his enemies, spreading rumors about him, etc. As a general rule, these troubles won't go as far as physical assault, unless the relationship between the PC and his Adversaries worsens (which is bound to happen if the PC reacts in a violent way). The GM can exchange 3 Opponents for one Enemy if she wishes to.
- **Enemies** are even more eager to harm the character or to get rid of him. They won't hesitate to conspire against or physically assault him, and, contrary to simple Adversaries, they are ready to spend a lot of energy to do so.

FAME

FAME LEVELS

A character's Fame is an Attribute that measures the his notoriety, the fact that he's known for his actions and may be recognized by people. Like other Attributes, Fame can be measured by a Level, from 0 (unknown character, except to his close relations) to 25 (world-famous character, a legend). A character's Fame depends on his past actions during his career, but will also evolve depending on his actions during the campaign. At the beginning of the game, only the Fame acquired during his years of preliminary experience is taken into account.

Attribute Levels can be bought with Fame points, at a cost similar to the cost of Attribute Levels (see Chapter **Experience**, page 269):

TARGET LEVEL	COST PER LEVEL
1 to 10	3
11 to 15	6
16	9
17	12
18	15
Etc.	+3 points/level

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Note: *do not* confuse character Fame *Levels* (which actually measure the character's renown) and Fame *Points* (which are used to buy Fame Levels)...

A character starts with a Fame Level of 0. He automatically gains one Fame Point per year of professional experience (include his Higher Education years). Some Professional Advantages make it possible to accumulate Fame Points before the game starts. **All Fame Points gained must immediately be spent to buy Fame Levels.**

FAME TEST

The Fame Test, made by rolling under the Level in question on 1D20, allows you to determine if the PC is recognized or if he goes unnoticed. If he wants his character to be recognized, the Player may, at any time, ask for a Test. If being identified may be a disadvantage to the character (if he's in enemy territory, for example), it's up to the GM to impose this Test.

INFLUENCE MODIFIER

Fame also measures the social influence the character may have due to his notoriety and reputation. This will allow him to be in his supporters' good graces, to have his demands and needs taken into account, or simply to use his reputation to establish himself. When a character wants to influence his entourage, he just has to perform a Fame Test (with the appropriate Modifiers, if you use the optional modifiers) or use the Test result that allowed him to be recognized. The GM is free to impose a penalty if the character is asking for a lot. The Success Modifier obtained then acts like a Bonus for all Connection Tests (*Leadership, Eloquence/Persuasion, Socializing/Seduction, Intimidation...*). In the case of a Failure, the character may be seen as too arrogant: the Failure Modifier then becomes a penalty... **Beware, this bonus usually only applies to the area where the character is known.** It's up to the GM to decide whether or not it applies.

If a character is recognized in enemy territory, his "Influence" will work against him: the Success Modifier then acts as a penalty for his Connection Tests (in the case of a Failure, nothing happens; theoretically, the character has not been recognized.)

Note: do not confuse Fame with "social status." An Officer does not need Fame to give orders and be obeyed, for example; his social status grants that. However, an Officer with a good Fame Level will have his orders enthusiastically followed and he will be able to ask more from his followers...

GAINING FAME POINTS DURING THE GAME

Characters can gain Fame at the end of each scenario or when they perform an action the GM deems important. As a general rule, each adventure earns one point minimum, but the GM may increase the gain depending on the PCs' actions, based on the following scale:

- The PCs' actions have consequences...
- ... on a small scale: +1 to +3 (they acted for/against an individual or a medium group, a small community, etc...)
- ... on a large scale: +5 to +7 (they acted for/against a very important individual/group, or for/against the interests of a large nation/faction).
- **The PCs' actions had many witnesses:** +3 to +5 (their action took place in public or has been widely spread by rumors).

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

ART/CRAFTSMANSHIP

Craftsmen accumulate Craftsmanship Points corresponding to the works they have done during their lives. These creations can be works of art they may sell later. These artifacts must be simple and their assembly may in no way be the product of technological processes (using electronic or mechanical equipment). Craftsmanship is first and foremost about creating works of art, but it's possible to choose bladed weapons, simple armors, or even handguns (no energy weapons, only projectile weapons).

Each Level of a work of art brings in 2D6 x 100 Sols. For Weapons and Protections, Craftsmanship Points are used like Assembly Points (see below).

ASSEMBLY

Assembly Points make it possible to modify basic equipment. In order to modify any equipment, it's necessary to use a certain number of Assembly Points. The character must, however, own this equipment whether he got it through his Profession or bought it (it can also be equipment belonging to another member of the group, if the characters know each other and if the GM allows it). Here are some examples of possible Improvements (as well as their limitations):

- **Augmented Damage (weapon):** 5 Assembly Points per extra Damage Point (Max. Bonus +5).
- **Extended Range (weapon):** 4 Points per 5% extra range (maximum improvement is +25%).
- **Battery/Ammunition:** 2 Points for 5% extra capacity (maximum improvement is +25%).
- **Improvement:** 10 Points to get a +1 bonus with this equipment (better balanced and more precise weapon, more efficient program or device, etc. Max. Bonus +3, incompatible with *Customization*).
- **Customization:** as above, but the cost is 5 Assembly Points only. On the other hand, it applies to **one**

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characteristic only (max. bonus +3, incompatible with *Improvement*).

- **Protection (personal protection):** 5 Points for 1 extra Protection Point (max. bonus +5).
- **Silencer:** 3 Assembly Points to impose a -1 penalty to hear when this device is on (max. penalty -7).
- **Integrity:** One Point per extra Integrity Point (may not exceed the maximum Integrity of the object).

Note that these Improvements are only possible on devices related to the character's field (weapons for a gunsmith, vehicles for a mechanic, computers for a computer technician, etc.).

Finally, a Technician may convert his Assembly Points to Gear Points if he wishes to (see below). Every piece of equipment acquired with these Points has been manufactured by the Technician.

Bars

Characters cannot own a drinking establishment. They lease them from the city they live in. To buy a Bar, you actually have to pay 15,000 Sols/m²... Bar Points determine the surface area of the premises, in square meters. A Bar must have a minimum ten-square-meter surface (otherwise it's called a drink stand...).

A Bar yields a monthly benefit of 15 Sols per square meter (after payment of salaries and expenses). That is, provided the PC takes care of it from time to time and he employs apprentices (or family members, friends, etc.) to maintain it when he's not there.

Corruption/Blackmail

The character benefits from a corrupt individual, or has learned enough compromising things to blackmail him. Corruption/Blackmail Points are used to buy Corruption/Blackmail Levels, at a cost similar to the Skill Levels cost (see **Databases**). The higher the Level, the more important the compromised individual, or the more he is ready to comply with the character's demands. The maximum Level is 20. A character can blackmail several individuals by spreading his Points among them.

To get a favor from the compromised individual, it's necessary to perform a Test under the Corruption/Blackmail Level. The GM is free to impose a Difficulty Modifier, depending on the importance of the demand (+5 for a small favor, -5 or more for a more important demand). In the case of a Success, the compromised individual complies with the character's demand. As a general rule, the GM should only allow reasonable demands.

Databases

Each Database contains information on a relatively specific field, for instance, foreign languages, ancient languages, weapons, vehicles, medical sciences, etc. It's up to the PC and the GM (who has the final word...) to agree on the exact breadth of the field of knowledge, while keeping in mind that the wider the field, **the more superficial this knowledge will be** (thus on a similar subject, there will a qualitative difference between information given by a Database about "Sciences" and a Database specialized in "Biology" or "Nuclear physics").

Databases have a Level, ranging from +0 to +15, which may be improved with Database Points at a cost similar to the Skill Level Improvement cost:

TARGET LEVEL	COST PER LEVEL
+1 to +5	1
+6 to +10	2
+11	3
+12	4
+13	5
Etc.	+1/level

The character may use a Database as a Skill, with a Base Level dependent upon the character's Intelligence (INT/INT), and the Mastery Level equals the Database Level. This "Skill" makes it possible to do research related to the Database's field of knowledge. The GM can definitely give a Difficulty Modifier to the Test, depending on the complexity of the researched information. Using a Database always takes a little time, from a few minutes for a simple search to a few hours for more complex research. The Success Margin determines the accuracy of the information obtained.

At the beginning of the game, a character may allocate his Database Points to as many Databases as he wishes. It is possible later to improve a Database at the following cost: **(Target Level) x (Target Level) x 1,000 Sols**

False Identity

A character holding False Identity Points may assign them to the Fame of one or more fictitious characters he's personifying. These characters' Fame works like that of a normal character and may therefore allow the Player to benefit from an Influence Bonus (see **Fame**, page 176 181). However the global cost of the Fame level intended for this False Identity is reduced by half. Therefore if a character wants a False Identity with a level of 10, it will cost 15 Points, not 30. Moreover, the character can give up False Identity Points to "protect" an identity, each spent Point acting as a -1 penalty for anyone wishing to uncover the fraud by doing research (maximum penalty: -15).

Farming/Breeding Plots

From the small artificial modules where fish like to hide to the large coral areas, the sea floors harbor vast natural gardens where underwater creatures are bred and aquatic plants are cultivated. A small farm can be the start of a new independent community. Points added in this area can be used to develop farming or hydroculture fields and to determine their size.

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Up to 50 Points, these are small personal plots (roughly 200 m²). Above that, it becomes a farm (that may spread out up to several thousand hectares).

SMALL PERSONAL PLOT

Each aquacultural plot enables the PC to earn a monthly income of 10 Sols per Surface Point, after payment of salaries and expenses. This is provided that the PC takes care of it from time to time and he employs apprentices (or family members, friends, etc.) to maintain it when he's not there.

SMALL INDEPENDENT FARM (10,000 M² AND ABOVE)

A small farm allows the PC to earn a monthly income of 50 Sols per Surface Point after payment of salaries and expenses. This is provided that the PC takes care of it from time to time and he employs farmhands (or family members, friends, etc.) to maintain it when he's not there.

Forgery

With Forgery Points it is possible to buy forged documents that come with a level. These act as a penalty for the person who will check the document to try to see whether or not it's a fake (maximum level: 15). The cost per level is the same as the cost per Skill Levels (see **Databases**, page 178). The Player can spread his Forgery Points between several documents but he must specify their nature (driving license, type of authorization, etc.).

Gear

This asset allows the character to freely collect equipment. The character can only choose gear accessible to his Profession, unless indicated otherwise. Each Point allows him to freely get 1,000 Sols worth of equipment. With this Advantage, the technician can get specialized equipment for repairing vessels, vehicles, and armors. It amounts to all the bits and pieces he may have accumulated and may include engine parts, armor plates, etc. He can use these Points during the game. Each Point amounts to 4,000 Sols worth of repairs on a device. He may use them to reduce the cost of the repair (maximum: half the cost). Since this equipment takes up a lot of space and his workshop may prove to be too small, the location of these parts will have to be specified. Note that a technician can, in play, salvage parts from wrecks to increase the total number of his Points.

Hideout/Cache

The character can buy Hideout/Cache levels. The cost of a level is double the Skill Level Improvement cost (see **Databases**, page 178). The maximum level a Hideout or Cache may reach is 15. It is possible to spread your Points between several locations. If the PC has to hide, the level of a Hideout acts like an extra penalty for all those who are trying to find it by investigating his contacts, checking his accounts, or his past, etc.

Inventory of Goods

Inventories are stockpiles the character has acquired without always knowing what they contain. The character may buy Inventory Points at the same cost as the Skill Level Improvement cost (see **Databases**, page 178). The maximum level an Inventory may reach is 20. It is possible to spread

1D20	CONDITION OF INVENTORY
1	**Destroyed goods:** value of warehouse reduced to nothing.
2	**Damaged goods:** value of warehouse reduced by half.
3	**Stolen goods:** someone stole the stock; the character can try to find out who!
4-15	**Goods in mint condition.**
16	**Seized goods:** the Inventory has been seized by the authorities; the character must go see them to get them back (and most likely pay a fine).
17	**Goods under surveillance:** the goods are watched over by the authorities and the character may be in trouble when he comes to get them.
18	**Wrong merchandise:** someone is using the character's warehouse or mistakenly took the wrong Inventory. This usually means serious problems are coming.
19	**Undervalued inventory**: the value of the goods is much higher than expected. The theoretical value is multiplied by 10.
20	**Complete surprise:** the Inventory holds equipment more precious than expected, probably hidden there by some organization. The value of the equipment found may be very high, may be compromising for the character or an organization, or an item factions are actively looking for, etc.

1D20	COMPOSITION OF INVENTORY
1–10	Miscellaneous goods
11	Food/Beverages
12	Light weapons
13	Ammunition
14	Armor
15	Mechanical (tools or spare parts)
16	Electronics (tools or spare parts)
17	Computers (tools or spare parts)
18	Medical supplies
19	Drugs
20	Diving equipment

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your Points across several Inventories. Each warehouse has a theoretical value of 10D10 x 20 Sols per level.

When creating the character, it is imperative to determine the kind of goods included in the Inventory (chosen or random) and where it is situated:

When the PC decides to resort to his Inventory, he must first check the condition of this Inventory:

The character is free, during the adventure, to take stock of all his Inventories. If he's looking for a specific piece of equipment or item in his stockpiles, he must succeed at a Test below the Inventory level. The Test Success Modifier determines how many copies of the sought item there are in the Inventory. However, the value of this equipment cannot be higher than the theoretical value of the Inventory.

MEDICAL PRACTICES

Medical Practices do not belong to characters. They lease them from the city they live in. To buy a Practice, you have to pay 45,000 Sols/m². Medical Practice Points determine the surface area of the premises, in square meters. For each Medical Practice Point, yours will have a one-square-meter surface. So, for instance, 5 Points will get you a five-square-meter Practice.

A Practice yields a monthly benefit of 30 Sols per square meter (after payment of salaries and expenses). That is, provided the PC takes care of it from time to time and he employs apprentices (or family members, friends, etc.) to maintain it when he's not there.

Like Technicians' Workshops, Medical Practices have an **Equipment Level.** At the beginning of the game, the Equipment Level is +0 (regardless of the surface of the premises), but it can be improved through upgrading equipment at the following cost: **(Target Level) x (Target Level) x 10,000 Sols**

Therefore, going from Level +0 to Level +1 amounts to 10,000 Sols; going from Level 1 to Level 2 costs 2 x 2 x 10,000 Sols, that is, 40,000 Sols, and so on. The maximum Equipment Level that can be reached is +5. This Level acts like a bonus for a character's Test when he's using his Medical Practice. It is, however, necessary to have a surface area equaling 10 times the Practice Level.

MINING CLAIMS

Unlike Farming and Breeding plants, characters do not own or rent mines. If the Mine is located on a nation's territory, you get an exploitation right. On the other hand, it is possible to rent or buy an exploitation right from a company or an individual owning a claim. Every claim must be validated by the Mining Claims Office. A small exploited mining claim can be the beginning of a new community. There are different kinds of mines:

- **Drinkable Water Plant:** There are freshwater springs that can be exploited at the bottom of the oceans, most of the time near the coasts. These sites are marked by huge, balloon-shaped water collectors that float above the spouting water wells.
- **Energy:** Many plants exploit energy resources. The most common are mobile stations that exploit fault magma. However, there are also settled stations with accumulators deep in the entrails of the earth to use the magma energy. Other possible energy mines include fields of water turbines (like underwater wind turbines churning in the most powerful currents), hydroelectric plants, or solar panels in coastal installations.
- **Metal:** The most common mines are those that exploit the deep's many right veins.
- **Gas:** It's possible to exploit the natural gas found within the earth.

These points can be used to develop small mining claims and to establish their size. Up to 50 Points, it's a Small Personal Company. Above that, it's an Industrial Company.

- **Small Personal Company:** Each small exploitation allows the PC to gain a monthly benefit of 10 Sols per Mining Claim Point (after payment of salaries and expenses). That is, provided the PC takes care of it from time to time and he employs apprentices (or family members, friends, etc.) to maintain it when he's not there.
- **Industrial Company:** an exploitation of this size allows the PC to gain a monthly benefit of 50 Sols per Mining Claim Point (after payment of salaries and expenses). That is, provided the PC takes care of it from time to time and he employs apprentices (or family members, friends, etc.) to maintain it when he's not there.

PERSONAL MEDICINE CABINET

A Personal Medicine Cabinet has medication that will help treat a patient. It doesn't include any specific equipment like that described in the gear chapter. The Personal Medicine Cabinet Points are used to buy Medicine Cabinet levels, at the same cost as the Skill Level Improvement cost (see **Databases**, page 178). The maximum level a Medicine Cabinet may reach is 20. A character may own several Personal Medicine Cabinets by spreading his Points between each Cabinet.

When a character wants to use a Medicine Cabinet, he performs a Test using its level (the GM may apply a penalty if she deems it necessary, when the doctor is confronted with an unknown disease, for instance). In the case of a Success, the character finds a medication or a product that may help him treat his patient; he then gains a bonus equivalent to his Success Modifier for his *Medicine* Test or his *First aid* Test. He must do it again every time it's necessary. After each successful use, the level of a Medicine Cabinet is reduced by 1 Point. The character may, however,

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buy various medications in order to restock his Cabinet; it will cost him 1,000 Sols per level.

Note: a Personal Medicine Cabinet weighs 1 kilo per level.

PRIVATE CABIN

The surface area of a Private Cabin is one square meter per Level. The cost of a Level is double the Skills cost (see **Databases** above). The Player must choose the station or the city where his character's Cabin is located. He can't have more than one Private Cabin; he can't spread his Points between several Cabins, unless he changes his Profession or community.

SMUGGLING NETWORK

A Smuggling Network makes it possible to smuggle equipment in or out of a specific city. The character may buy Smuggling Network Points at a cost equal to the Skill Level Improvement cost (see **Databases**, page 178). The maximum level a Smuggling Network may reach is 15. It is possible to spread your Points between several Networks.

When he wants to use his Smuggling Network, the character must perform a successful Test below his level. In the case of a Failure, the authorities have found the breach in the network, the level of which is reduced by 1 point. It is possible to gain levels back, but this must be the occasion of a short adventure, during which the smuggler reorganizes his Network by appealing to his Contacts, Allies, or his Suppliers in particular. Depending on the Player's efforts, the GM decides whether or not the Smuggling Network gains a level (15 remaining the maximum).

SOLIDARITY

The Solidarity between workers' doesn't have any financial value. In lieu of this, any worker or longshoreman appealing to his fellows may sometimes benefit from their immediate help. If he just requires a simple helping hand (get somewhere to stay, find food, party, etc.), the character must perform a Test with a result below his Fame Level. If it's more than that (help to hide, to fight, etc.), the character must use his Influence instead.

STALL/SMALL SHOP

Stalls or Shops do not belong to characters. They lease them from the city in which they live. Stalls are spaces granted by the merchant unions. On the other hand, it's possible to invest in a shop, but it will cost 10,000 Sols/m². Stall/Small shop Points determine the surface area of the room in square meters

A stall yields a monthly benefit of 10 Sols per square meter (after payment of salaries and expenses). That is, provided the PC takes care of it from time to time and he employs apprentices (or family members, friends, etc.) to maintain it when he's not there. A shop has a minimum size of 10 and yields a monthly benefit of 10 Sols per square meter (under the conditions outlined above).

WORKSHOPS

Technicians' Workshops can prove to be very useful and, above all, a good revenue stream. Workshops do not belong to characters. They lease them from the city they live in. To purchase a Workshop, one must pay 15,000 Sols/m². Workshops Points determine the room's surface area in square meters. Each Workshop Point gets a one-square-meter surface area. So, for instance, 5 Points will get a five-square-meter Workshop. The gear that can be fixed depends on this surface area:

- **10m²:** Exo-1 to 2 Armors
- **36m²:** Exo-3 to 6 Armors
- **100m²:** Vehicles up to 100 tons
- **Above:** one square meter per vehicle ton

A Workshop yields a monthly benefit of 20 Sols per square meter (after payment of salaries and expenses). That is, provided the PC takes care of it from time to time, and he employs apprentices (or family members, friends, etc.) to maintain it when he's not there.

All Workshops have an **Equipment Level** for all the tools and machinery a character has at his disposal. At the beginning of the game, the Equipment Level is +0 (regardless of the surface area of the Workshop), but it can be improved through the upgrading of equipment, at the following cost:

(Target Level) x (Target Level) x 5,000 Sols

This means that to go from Level +0 to Level +1 costs 5,000 Sols; to go from Level 1 to Level 2 costs 2 x 2 x 5,000 Sols—that is, 20,000 Sols; and so on. The maximum Equipment Level someone may attain is +5. This Level acts like a bonus for the character's Test when he's using his Workshop.

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CHAPTER 2.3

SKILLS

"Knowing what to do with your ten fingers is something anyone can manage. Knowing how to do it with talent, that has to be learned, and that's what is remarkable!"

— A TEACHER TO HIS PUPIL

This chapter presents all the Skills, sorted by domain. Some descriptions include information relating to the Tests to perform; for more information, see the chapter **Tests & Actions**, page 200.

SUMMARY OF TERMS AND SYMBOLS USED

ASSOCIATED ATTRIBUTES

Each Skill is associated with two Attributes (sometimes only one), allowing you to calculate its Base Level. You only need to add the levels of the two Attributes and to check the Natural Abilities table on page 98.

Reminder: certain Skills are hard to learn and suffer a penalty that reduces the Base Level. The first Mastery Levels bought for these Skills are used to lower the starting penalty, which is necessary before you can develop positive Mastery Levels.

X: EXCLUSIVE SKILL

These Skills cannot be used until they have been been learned. Usually, it is only possible to learn such a Skill through a Profession (it is then a part of the Professional Skills) or by Training (see the Advantage of the same name). Developing an Exclusive Skill in another way (for instance as a *non-professional Skill*, at double the cost) requires **the GM's approval.** You only need to buy a single level in the Exclusive Skill to use it. **Its new level is then -3** and it can usually be improved with no further restriction.

• : LIMITING SKILL

These Skills include fields, knowledge, or specific aptitudes that are used together with another Skill. For instance, hand-to-hand fighting while maintaining balance on a beam requires the *Hand-to-hand combat* Skill as well as the *Acrobatics/Balance* Skill. Just like delivering a solemn speech in a foreign

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language requires the use of the *Eloquence/Persuasion* Skill as well as the Skill corresponding to the language in which the speech is made. Technically, and as indicated by the name, **the level of such a Skill limits the level of the Skill to which it is connected.** Most of the time Limiting Skills can also be used alone as unique Skills.

NP: NATURAL PROGRESSION SKILL

These Skills represent knowledge that a character may naturally acquire, because he is exposed to it every day; it mostly includes foreign languages, **Knowledge of an environment** and knowledge of nations or organizations. For each year of experience spent in a given nation/organization, the character gains 1 level in the associated Skill, **up to a +5 maximum Mastery Level.**

†: PREREQUISITE SKILLS

In order to develop his Skills, the character must meet prerequisites and possess the indicated Skill(s) at a certain level. Thus, for instance, the *Computer hacking* Skill cannot be developed without a good knowledge of the *Computing* Skill.

SKILL DESCRIPTION

Absence (X) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: ADA/WIL

This Skill allows a character to go undetected, to pass unnoticed through a crowd, etc. The Success Modifier acts as a penalty when applied to a Perception or *Observation* Test by individuals from whom the character is trying to escape. This penalty also acts on the Reaction Test carried out by an eventual victim. If the character maintains his concentration, the Skill takes effect. If he does something else, he may need to redo the Test.

Acrobatics/Balance • (Physical ability)

Associated Attributes: COO/COO

Limiting Skill for: any physical action, including an acrobatic maneuver or requirement to keep one's balance.

This Skill allows the character to execute acrobatic moves or gymnastic flips (outside the aquatic environment). It can be used to move through a laser grid, to get out of a fight, to perform an acrobatic attack, etc. The Difficulty of the move depends on its complexity and the risks the character has to take. *Acrobatics/Balance* can also be used when the character must keep his balance (or as a Limiting Skill, when he must act when in a precarious balance). Finally, this Skill is useful when falling, allowing the character on the one hand to perform rolls (and to get back on his feet in the same move), and on the other hand to control the fall and the damage it causes (see the chapter **States of Health**, section **Other Sources of Physical Damage**, page 247). For all these actions, the bulk of any gear carried is a difficulty that should not be overlooked (see the chapter **Equipment**, section **Hindrance and Penalties Due to Armor**, in *CRB2* page 63).

Note: in an underwater environment or in zero gravity, *Acrobatics/Balance* is replaced either by *Underwater maneuvering* or *Zero-G maneuvering*, or by the appropriate *Armor maneuvering* Skill if a exo-armor is used (see the description of these Skills below).

Aquaculture/Livestock Farming (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

This Skill allows a character to use techniques for livestock farming, aquaculture, and hydroponic farming common in the underwater world.

Armed Combat (Combat (Melee))

Associated Attributes: STR/COO

Note: in zero gravity and underwater environments, the Combat Skills are limited by the level of *Zero G maneuvering* or *Underwater maneuvering*.

This Skill makes it possible to use simple weapons, handled with one or two hands, such as knives and daggers, truncheons and combat staffs, sabers and swords, etc. The use of more exotic weapons is included in the *Special Weapon (Melee)* Skill *[...]*.

Armor Maneuvering [. . .] • (Piloting)

Associated Attributes: COO/ADA

Limiting Skill for: all physical actions in exo-armor, notably *Acrobatics/Balance*, *Athletics*, *Climbing*, and hand-to-hand or ranged combat skills.

This Skill allows the use of mechanized armor (also known as exo-armor), which are similar in many ways to vehicles. Maneuvering these armors demands careful training. Certain Skills, those that require a great deal of precision, cannot be used while in armor (*Surgery* or *First Aid*, for example).

Many kinds of exo-armor—called "hybrid exo-armor"—can be used in several different environments. So the character must develop the Skill that corresponds to each environment. For example, a character in underwater exo-armor who finds himself on the surface will use his *External exo-armor* Skill. An individual endowed with hybrid exo-armor that's capable of flight must know three Skills: *underwater exo-armor*, *External exo-armor*, and *Atmospheric exo-armor*...

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SKILLS BY CATEGORY

CATEGORY	SKILL	ASSOCIATED ATTRIBUTES
Combat *(melee)**	• Armed combat	STR/COO
	• Hand-to-hand combat	STR/COO
	• Heavy weapons (melee)	STR/STR
	• Martial Arts [. . .] •	COO/ADA
	• Special Weapons (melee) [. . .]	varies
Combat (Shooting)**	• Bows, spearguns, Crossbows	COO/PER
	• Handguns	COO/PER
	• Heavy weapons (shooting) (-3)	COO/PER
	• Sharpshooting • (-3)	PER/WIL
	• Shoulder-Fired Weapons/Rifles	COO/PER
	• Special Weapons (shooting) [. . .]	varies
	• Throwing Weapons (-3)	COO/PER
Communication/ Social Relationships	• Artistic Expression [. . .]	Varies
	• Eloquence/Persuasion †	INT/PRE
	• Empathic Analysis (-3)	INT/PER
	• Intimidation	WIL/PRE
	• Leadership	WIL/PRE
	• Socializing/Seduction	PRE/PRE
Knowledge	• Bureaucracy †	INT/INT
	• Business/Trafficking [. . .] †	INT/PRE
	• Cartography † (X)	INT/INT
	• Cryptography † (X)	INT/INT
	• Education/General Knowledge (-3)	INT/INT
	• Finding Information † (-3)	INT/INT
	• Gambling	INT/WIL
	• Knowledge of Nations/ Organizations [. . .] • (NP)	INT/INT
	• Navigation † (X)	INT/INT
	• Science/Specialized Knowledge [. . .]	INT/INT
	• Strategy † (-3)	INT/INT
	• Tactics [. . .]	INT/ADA
Languages/ Dialects	• Ancient Languages [. . .]	INT/INT
	• Foreign Languages [...] (NP)	INT/INT
	• Sign Language [...] (x)	COO/PER
	• Specialized Languages [. . .] (NP)	INT/INT
Physical abilities	• Acrobatics/Balance •	COO/COO
	• Athletics	STR/COO
	• Climbing	STR/COO
	• Endurance •	CON/WIL
	• FOF Breathing (-3)	CON/WIL
	• Underwater Maneuvering •	STR/COO
	• Zero-G Maneuvering •	COO/ADA

CATEGORY	SKILL	ASSOCIATED ATTRIBUTES
Piloting	• Armor Maneuvering [. . .] •	COO/ADA
	• Piloting [. . .]	Varies
	• Remote piloting (-3)	INT/ADA
Special Skills	• Absence (X)	ADA/WIL
	• Body Control (X)	CON/WIL
	• Control of Mutations [. . .] (X)	Varies
	• Hybrid (Hybrids Only)	CON/COO
	• Hypnosis (X)	WIL/PRE
	• Mastery of the Polaris Echo (X)	INT/WIL
	• Mastery of the Polaris Effect (X)	WIL/WIL
	• Meditation (X)	WIL/WIL
	• Mental Shield (X)	WIL/WIL
	• Polaris Powers (X)	INT/WIL
Stealth/ Subterfuge	• Camouflage/Concealment (-3)	PER/ADA
	• Discretion/Shadowing	PER/ADA
	• Disguise/Deception	ADA/PRE
	• Escape (X)	COO/WIL
	• Pickpocket (-3)	COO/ADA
	• Stealth/Silent Movement •	PER/ADA
Survival/Outside	• Hunting/Tracking (X)	PER/ADA
	• Knowledge of an Environment [...] • (NP)	INT/ADA
	• Observation	PER/WIL
	• Orientation	PER/ADA
	• Survival (X)	ADA/WIL
Techniques	• Aquaculture/Livestock Farming	INT/INT
	• Armory (X)	INT/INT
	• Art/Craftsmanship [. . .] (X)	INT/PER
	• Computer Hacking † (X)	INT/INT
	• Computing † (-3)	INT/INT
	• Electronics † (X)	INT/INT
	• Explosives (X)	INT/WIL
	• First Aid (-3)	INT/ADA
	• Forgery † (X)	INT/PER
	• Mechanics [. . .]	INT/INT
	• Onboard Weapons/Artillery (X)	INT/INT
	• Security Systems (X)	INT/INT
	• Soundscan Analysis (X)	INT/ADA
	• Spying/Surveillance (X)	INT/INT
	• Surgery † (X)	INT/INT
	• Technical Engineering [. . .] † (X)	INT/INT
	• Training (-3)	WIL/PRE
	• Traps (-3)	INT/PER

** in zero gravity and underwater environments, the Combat Skills are limited by the level of Zero G maneuvering or Underwater maneuvering.*

*** all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests when used underwater. All others ranged weapons have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests when used underwater.*

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- **Atmospheric exo-armor (X):** This talent allows a pilot to maneuver armor that possesses atmospheric boosters that enable it to fly.
- **External exo-armor:** this includes Surface exo-armor
- **Underwater** exo-armor
- **Space exo-armor (-3)**: This talent allows a character to use space exo-armor. It is also used for procedures during atmospheric re-entry.

Note: characters who use exo-armor in the underwater environment or in weightless conditions must use the appropriate *Armor Maneuvering* Skill (underwater exo-armor or space exo-armor), instead of the *Zero-G maneuvering* or *Underwater maneuvering* Skills. Effectively, even if the piloting of this kind of equipment requires a certain amount of know-how, these armors are specially built to correct for movement problems in their specific environment, erasing all the penalties that a character who doesn't benefit from mechanical aid might suffer.

Armory (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

This Skill allows a character to maintain and repair firearms.

Art/Craftsmanship [. . .] (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/PER

This Skill allows a character to make various objects, which he can sell. There is a Skill for each general category of products, as defined by the Gamemaster (Cooking, Painting, Sculpture, Bladed Weapons, Musical Instruments, etc.) These objects may be simple or may not even need any technological processes to build. While a craftsman can build bladed weapons or simple armor, in no case can he make electronic or mechanical equipment (for that, he must use the *Technical Engineering* Skill).

Artistic Expression [. . .] (Comm./Soc. Rel.)

Associated Attributes: varies (see examples below)

This talent makes it possible to know the different techniques for storytelling, dancing, acting (in the entertainment field), singing, etc. The Test Difficulty may be determined by the number of people in the audience, the circumstances of the performance, etc. Each artistic specialty has a specific relevant Skill, for instance:

- Singing (INT/PRE, -3)
- Acting/Storytelling (ADA/PRE, -3)
- Dancing (COO/PRE, -3)
- Music instrument (COO/PER, X)

Athletics (Physical ability)

Associated Attributes: STR/COO

This Skill includes all all manner of physical actions: running, jumping, swimming, and so on. It makes it possible to know the average distance traveled by a character moving at his maximum speed, on the ground and in the water (see chapter **Combat**, section **Movements & Gestures**, page 219). If a Player wants his character to try to go faster than his average traveling speed, he may perform a Random Athletics Test: the Success or Failure Modifier then indicates the number of meters the character gains (or loses), compared to its average value. The Test Difficulty can be affected by the ground conditions or the natural conditions (for instance the strength of the current in the case of swimming). A Catastrophe may indicate that the character risks hurting himself (when falling, notably: see **States of Health**, section **Other Sources of Physical Damage**, page 247) or has actually hurt himself (muscle strain, for instance, that automatically inflicts a Moderate Wound).

Body Control (X) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: CON/WIL

This Skill allows a character to lower his respiration rate and body temperature over a number of hours equal to the Success Modifier. He can also consume much less oxygen (his air reserve is expanded by 10% for each Success Modifier point), simulate death, better withstand the cold, etc. While using this Skill, the character cannot attempt another action, and must remain calm and immobile.

Bows, spearguns and Crossbows (Combat (Shooting))

Associated Attributes: COO/PER

Note : all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests when used underwater. All others ranged weapons have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests when used underwater.

This Skill allows the character to use stringed weapons, such as bows, spearguns (not the heavy ones) and crossbows.

Bureaucracy † (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 5.

This Skill makes it possible to know administrative organizations and current laws, to know where to ask for a particular authorization, how to get a certain permit or official document, even to speed up certain procedures (either through a legal loophole or clever bribes...). The Test Difficulty depends on the nature and on the sensitivity level of the demand. If it's about a procedure that's really specific to a community, nation, or organization, *Bureaucracy* can be limited by an adequate *Knowledge of nations/organizations* skill.

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Business/Trafficking [. . .] † (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/PRE

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 5 (common gear) or 10 (high technology).

This Skill makes it possible for a character to purchase (or resell!) equipment, goods, services, or information. It also reveals how business-minded he is, as well as his knowledge of a particular market (producers and products, sellers and buyers, networks and trading places, etc.). Each type of product is the object of a specific Skill, such as :

- **Food (-3)**
- **Information (-3)**
- **Medical supplies (-3)**
- **Raw material (-3)**
- **Vehicles (-3)**
- **Weapons (X)**

The Test Difficulty depends on the rarity and availability of the product (it's a disadvantage when you're looking to buy, but an advantage when you're trying to sell!). The Success Margin can be used to reduce the time needed to buy or find products, services, or information of better quality.

Camouflage/Concealment (-3) (Stealth/Subt.)

Associated Attributes: PER/ADA

This Skill allows a character to conceal himself within the natural environment, using nooks or crevices, darkness, and vegetation (including underwater vegetation). Most of the time, *Camouflage/Concealment* assumes the use of specific techniques and subterfuges or adaptive gear: a combination of camouflage, shelter that's camouflaged to merge into the countryside, makeup and mimetic disguise, etc. While moving, *Camouflage/Concealment* also allows a character to cover his own tracks. This Skill can also be used by a ship when it attempts to conceal itself with physical means (for example, by hiding in an underwater trench or by covering it so that it looks like a rock or a shipwreck). *Camouflage/Concealment* is often used in an Opposed Test, against the opponent's *Observation*. Most often, the Test's difficulty depends on the environment and the opportunities for concealment available there. Finally, this Skill allows a character to hide an object on himself, in his luggage, or in a location. The Difficulty of the Test depends on the size of the object and the vigilance of the people whom he's attempting to fool.

Cartography † (X) (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10.

This Skill makes it possible to draw up topographic surveys, regional maps, and to know where you are situated on a map. The use of this Skill requires basic equipment (to draw the map at least, but also various measuring devices, or even a satellite positioning system if the PC can get his hands on one!). The Test Difficulty depends on the mapped area's surface and complexity, and on the tools used by the PC. He may, on the other hand, choose the level of accuracy desired (a very accurate map will be harder to achieve than a simple hand drawing). The time needed to draw the map of a region depends on the terrain and its surface. Such an action is certain to take hours, sometimes days or even weeks, if the sector is hard to access. The Success (or Failure) Margin usually determines the accuracy (or the inaccuracies) of the map: if she wishes to, the GM can use half the Success/Failure Modifier for the *Navigation* or *Orientation* Tests of a character using the map. The *Cartography* Skill can also be used to correct or improve a map.

Climbing (Physical ability)

Associated Attributes: STR/COO

This Skill makes it possible to climb walls. It also makes it possible to know how to use climbing gear, how to rappel, etc. In the event of a Catastrophe, the character falls...

Computer Hacking † (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Computing* 10.

This Skill allows a character to illegally enter computer systems and databases. The Difficulty depends on the level of the system's protection.

Computing † (-3) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10.

This Skill includes all the operations performed with the aid of computerized devices.

Control of Mutations [. . .] (X) (Special Skills)

Certain mutations give characters access to specific Skills. Their usage, the associated Attributes, the eventual penalty to the Base Level, and the cost of apprenticeship are detailed in the chapter **Character Creation**, section **3. Special Abilities**, page 108.

Cryptography † (X) (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10.

This Skill makes it possible to code and decipher documents and messages. As a general rule, the Player can choose the penalty to apply to any encryption Test. The Difficulty Modifier of the character who will try to decipher the message will be equal to this penalty, increased by the Success Modifier obtained by the cryptographer at the end of the Test. If he uses a computer to encrypt his message,

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it is imperative that the decipherer do the same. On the other hand, if the code has been created with no computing support, it can be deciphered the same way (in that case, resorting to a computer and appropriate program makes it possible to benefit from a +7 bonus...). The more complex the code, the more time necessary to decipher it (count in hours, in even days...).

Discretion/Shadowing (Stealth/Subterfuge)

Associated Attributes: PER/ADA

This Skill allows a character to pass unnoticed through a public place, avoid notice, or follow a person without being discovered.

Disguise/Deception (Stealth/Subterfuge)

Associated Attributes: ADA/PRE

This Skill allows a character to change his appearance and even to pass for someone else. The Difficulty of the Test depends on the envisioned objectives: lightly modifying his appearance is relatively simple, but adopting an appearance and behavior far different than the character's normal state is much more difficult. *Disguise/Deception* is most often used in an Opposed Test against the Intelligence (or *Observation*, depending on the situation) of the opponent. The use of adaptive gear (disguise, makeup, etc.) is often necessary. Likewise, the knowledge of certain Skills may be indispensable if the character needs to express himself and have a dialogue with people whom he wishes to trick.

When usurping the identity of a real person, the GM may give a bonus to an opponent who is more or less familiar with the person imitated. To fool someone's close friend is extremely difficult. To do so, the the deceiver must use a sophisticated mask of the person, perfect makeup, and have studied the impersonated person's gestures and the behavior attentively over many hours.

Education/General Knowledge (-3) (Know.)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

This Skill represents the character's level of general education. At a very low level (Global Level lower than 3), the character can neither read nor write, and probably has great difficulty speaking correctly. At a low level (Levels 3 to 5), it indicates familiarity with essential knowledge: to read, write, or calculate. At an average level (6 to 10), it amounts to elementary knowledge in written expression, history, geography, arithmetic, science, etc. Finally, at a higher level (11 and above), it represents everything that can be included in the field of "general knowledge" and familiarity with the world at large.

Some Skills (knowledge in general) require a minimum education level to be developed. In those cases, their description indicates the required level in *Education/General knowledge.* This Skill is commonly used for Tests that challenge a character's specific recall, to know if a character knows or remembers a point of general knowledge, such as a famous historic date, the capital of a particular state, etc. (if the subject becomes really specific, the corresponding *Science/Specialized knowledge* Skill must be used).

Electronics † (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10.

This Skill allows a character to install, repair, or modify electrical or electronic equipment.

Eloquence/Persuasion † (Comm./Soc. Rel.)

Associated Attributes: INT/PRE

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10 if the objective is a formal speech (political, diplomatic, etc.).

This Skill indicates the character's ability to express himself, communicate, and persuade. It may, therefore, depending on the situation, be used to make a speech, to take part in verbal sparring, to convince (in selling or buying to obtain the best price, gain the upper hand in diplomatic negotiations, etc.), or even to manipulate or con the people with whom you are speaking. A *Persuasion* attempt will always be settled by an Opposed Test, between the character's Skill and the Willpower or Intelligence of the opposition, depending on the situation and the kind of argument used. A simple speech directed toward an individual or a passive group will be settled by a normal Test, the Difficulty of which depends on the audience's state of mind and the message the character wants to convey.

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Note: depending on the speech's theme or the audience's nature, *Eloquence/Persuasion* could possibly be limited by various Knowledge Skills; for instance, *Bureaucracy* ("Of course this authorization is legit..."), *Business/Trafficking* ("This is exactly the kind of gear you need!"), *Knowledge of nations/organizations* (for a speech aimed at a particular group), or *Science/Specialized knowledge* (for a debate between experts). Needless to say, if the character speaks in a foreign language, he will also be limited by the level acquired in that language.

Empathic Analysis (-3) (Comm./Soc. Rel.)

Associated Attributes: INT/PER

This Skill makes it possible for the character to understand a person's feelings or emotions. He does so by studying his behavior, his gestures and posture, his verbal tics, and his hesitations. By doing so, the observing character may uncover a particular state of mind, at a given time, and more or less determine if the person he's talking to is lying to him, hiding information from him, or is under any kind of duress. The Test Difficulty depends on the intensity of the the target's feelings or emotions, as well as his state of mind (calm and serene or, at the other extreme, troubled, under a lot of stress, frightened even). Note that this is a shallow and immediate emotional perception: the perceived emotions will be fairly unspecific and more like a general impression or a hunch than a true and complete psychological profile.

Animals and non-human creatures that are gifted with intelligence can also be the objects of an empathic analysis. In most cases, however, the information obtained will probably be vague, because it picks up basic emotions—fear, survival instinct—especially with animals (it is possible to uncover more complex emotions with creatures endowed with reason). On the other hand, in the *Polaris RPG* universe, some creatures can convey feelings through telepathy: as is possible for certain corals and marine mammals. *In* those cases, *Empathic analysis* lets the user perceive the emotional emissions more efficiently, and also draw from them some limited and indistinct information.

Since it allows a better understanding of human emotions, *Empathic analysis* may be used in a more proactive way, during a discussion, an interrogation, or even during a scam attempt. To do that, the character may watch out for the person's emotional reactions, and try to find the most effective words. For instance, he may want to calm a stressed person, to talk about a delicate matter with tact and diplomacy, to find a person's weak point to get on his nerves, charm him, break him, or push him to betray himself. *Empathic analysis* must then be used in support of the character's *Eloquence/Persuasion*, *Socializing/Seduction,* or *Intimidation* Skills (see the rules on supporting Skills in *CRB2* page 191). All that only works, of course, with human beings (or rational beings) whose language is known by the character.

Note: the Empathy Mutation is much more powerful than this Skill (and can therefore totally replace it if it is correctly mastered) because it allows the character to dig deeper into the target's mind and to perceive his emotions more efficiently. Communication with empathic creatures is also greatly improved. See the description of this mutation in the chapter **Building the Character Up** page 188.

Endurance • (Physical ability)

Associated Attributes: CON/WIL

Limiting Skill for: any exhausting action set to last during a period of time. This can apply both to physical efforts and mental ones. If the GM uses the advanced rules for Fatigue (see *CRB2* page 203), the limiting aspect of this Skill is no longer useful (Endurance is directly used in these rules).

This Skill amounts to the character's resistance to effort and Fatigue, physical as well as mental.

Escape (X) (Stealth/Subterfuge)

Associated Attributes: COO/WIL

This Skill allows a character to free himself from bonds, such as ropes, mechanical handcuffs, or nets. The Difficulty of this Test depends on the complexity of the bonds. In some instances, the GM may require the use of gear (like a pin to pick handcuff locks or a sharp object for cutting rope). If the PC doesn't have one, either escape is impossible or the Difficulty is increased.

Explosives (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/WIL

This Skill allows a character to use and defuse explosives, to understand demolition techniques, and to assemble explosive charges, with an eye to inventing new procedures.

Finding Information † (-3) (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Necessary Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10.

This Skill is useful for finding precise information in databases or for conducting research on a given subject. The Difficulty of the Test depends on the rarity or the sensitivity of the information for which you are searching.

First Aid (-3) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/ADA

This indispensable Skill allows a character to treat small wounds, but more importantly to stabilize more severe injuries. The applications for this Skill are not only limited to simple "first aid," but also also to basic emergency medicine,

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and that is what makes it so useful. See the chapter about the characters' health status for more information.

FOF Breathing (Foreign Organic Fluid) (-3) (Physical ability)

Associated Attributes: CON/WIL

This Skill allows the character to master the techniques of breathing fluid or any other organic or artificial substance. Each time a PC breathes fluid, he must perform an *FOF Breathing* Test, the Difficulty of which depends on the product used (with a -10 penalty, *neofluid* is harder to breathe than *hyperfluid*, which only gives a -4 penalty, per the chapter **Gear** in *CRB2*, page 27). If he fails, he panics and cannot do anything else apart from trying to take his helmet off. If he is prevented from doing so, he may perform this Test again each Combat Round, with a +1 bonus (cumulative) for each attempt, until he can successfully breathe calmly.

Breathing a fluid is not a natural thing and the body needs time to get used to it. This is the reason why many divers who are not used to the fluid need an adaptation time and wait until acclimation before diving. **As such, any character breathing fluid suffers a -10 penalty to all his Tests for 2D6 minutes.** This penalty may be reduced by the Success Modifier obtained on the character's successful breath without panicking Test.

Fatigue is a common consequence of breathing all fluids because of the increased effort. The body gets tired faster. The character suffers a cumulative -1 penalty on all his physical action Tests, for each half-hour that passes or every 2 Combat Rounds in the case of intense activity, until he rests.

Optional (see Fatigue in CRB2 page 203): Every hour, in the case of normal activity, the character must perform an Endurance Test using *FOF breathing* limited by the Endurance Skill level. During intense activities (combat, for example), Endurance Tests must be performed every 3 Combat Rounds.

Even when using fluid, the human body is not made to resist the inconceivable pressures in the deep. A diver is therefore limited to the following depths :

- **Neofluid:** 500 m + (**Global** Level of *FOF breathing* x 500 m).
- **Hyperfluid:** 750 m + (**Global** Level *FOF breathing* x 750 m).

It is possible to use certain drugs to go below these depth limits. These drugs temporarily improve the level of *FOF breathing* to determine the diving depth. They have various side effects but most of the time they cause headaches, pain in the whole body, stomachaches, and, in the worst case, internal bleeding.

Moreover, staying in a liquid environment for too long is dangerous. The risks are that the skin may begin to peel off and the nervous system may be harmed. A diver using fluid is therefore limited to the following diving times:

- **Neofluid:** (Global Level of *FOF breathing*/2) + 8 hours.
- **Hyperfluid:** Global Level of *FOF breathing* + 12 hours.

Forgery † (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/PER

Prerequisites: the necessary Skill depends on the type of forgery required, often *Art/Craftsmanship*, *Computing*, *Bureaucracy*, *Electronics*, etc., at a level of 7 or more.

This Skill allows a character to create false documents, fake accreditations, etc. The Player can give a penalty to his character. This penalty, augmented by the Success Modifier obtained by the result of a Test, determines the Difficulty of the Intelligence Test for the individual who checks the document. The base Difficulty depends on the complexity of the document being forged (falsifying a simple authorization is relatively easy, but creating a false identity card would be more difficult). Note that, to create false papers, the forger must often get his hands on codes or obtain particular information.

Gambling (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/WIL

This Skill amounts to the knowledge of most games (games based purely on chance need Luck) and also allows the character to cheat at these games. Every Player must take part in an Opposed Test, the winner being the one who gets the highest Success Margin. If a character decides to cheat, he benefits from a bonus to this Test (that he may set himself). However, his adversaries may be entitled to a Perception Test, with a bonus equivalent to the one of the cheater: the higher their Success Margin, the more they will suspect something. With a Margin equal to or greater than 15 ("Perfect Success"), the cheater is caught red-handed. Some circumstances can greatly increase the complexity of the cheat's task; for instance, a video system watching the Players.

Note: if cheating implies handling (cards, chips, dice, etc.) during the game—for instance, replacing accessories by rigged equipment or dealing fake cards—you can use the *Camouflage/Concealment* Skill as a Limiting Skill during the *Gambling* Test.

Handguns (Combat (Shooting))

Associated Attributes: COO/PER

This Skill allows the use of small weapons like pistols, revolvers, or even submachine guns.

Note: all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests when used underwater. All others ranged weapons have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests when used underwater.

Hand-to-Hand Combat (Combat (Melee))

Associated Attributes: STR/COO

Note: in zero gravity and underwater environments, the Combat Skills are limited by the level of *Zero G maneuvering* or *Underwater maneuvering*.

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This Skill allows the character to fight and wrestle with bare hands. It only includes basic offense and defense techniques, the more complex techniques being managed by the *Martial arts* Skill *[. . .]*.

Heavy Weapons (Melee) (Combat (Melee))

Associated Attributes: STR/STR

This Skill includes the use of heavy weapons, such as cutter spreaders, combat drills, etc. If the character is not steady (leaning on something, equipped with a special harness, etc.), the Skill level must be divided by two.

Note: in zero gravity and underwater environments, the Combat Skills are limited by the level of *Zero G maneuvering or Underwater maneuvering.*

Heavy Weapons (Shooting) (-3) (Combat (Shooting))

Associated Attributes: COO/PER

Note : all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests when used underwater. All others ranged weapons have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests when used underwater.

This Skill includes the use of light, mobile artillery: RPGs, mortars, portable torpedo launchers, and so on. If the character is not steady, the Skill level must be divided by two.

Hunting/Tracking (X) (Survival/Outside)

Associated Attributes: PER/ADA

This Skill covers all the techniques for hunting, fishing, and tracking. The Difficulty depends on the terrain, natural conditions, visibility, etc. This Skill is limited most of the time by the *Knowledge of a specific environment* (see below), because the hunted animals and the tracking techniques are specific to each environment.

Hybrid (Hybrids Only) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: CON/COO

Only Natural hybrids, Geno-Hybrids, Techno-Hybrids, and characters endowed with the Amphibian mutation may develop this Skill, which represents their affinity for the aquatic environment and the mastery of their mutation or their modifications. For more details, see the chapter **Character Creation**, section **2. Genetic Type of the Character**, page 104 and section **3. Special Abilities**, page 108.

Hypnosis (X) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: WIL/PRE

This Skill allows a character to put an individual into a state of hypnosis (however, this is impossible to use on an animal or in open combat). A hypnotized character stays that way as long as the hypnotist concentrates on him, or for a number of minutes equal to the Success Modifier. To implant a hypnotic suggestion, it's necessary to succeed at an Opposed Test against the target's Willpower. It's only possible to implant one hypnotic suggestion at a time. *Hypnosis* can also serve to dive into the unconscious mind of a character, to bring forward forgotten events.

Intimidation (Comm./Social Relationships)

Associated Attributes: WIL/PRE

As indicated by the name of the Skill, it can be used to intimidate, by showing oneself as confident and/or threatening. Contrary to the *Eloquence/Persuasion* Skill, which allows you to convince through spoken words and sensible arguments (or at least seeming to), in this case it is more about *coercing*, by inspiring concern and even fear in the people you're talking to, who then will be more inclined to take the character seriously. This Skill can also be used indirectly, to unsettle a character during a negotiation, for instance (in that case use the rules on supporting Skills, in the *CRB2* page 191). For the use of *Intimidation* in combat, see also the chapter **Combat**, section **Melee Combat**, page 221. If the Game Master agrees, a character with a low Presence and a negative natural ability can use this penalty as a bonus when he tries to terrorize somebody.

Knowledge of an Environment [. . .] • (NP) (Survival/Outside)

Associated Attributes: INT/ADA

Limiting Skills for: all the actions requiring a certain knowledge of a given environment, for example *Hunting/Tracking*, *Orientation*, *Survival*, and even *Observation*.

This Skill allows a character to know the specifics of an environment: dangers, phenomena, general knowledge of the flora and fauna, etc. There is a Skill for each environment:

- **Underwater cities and stations (urban environment)**
- **Oceans (-3)**
- **Underground (-3)**
- **Surface (X)**

Knowledge of Nations/Organizations [. . .] • (NP) (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Limiting Skill for: any action requiring a specific knowledge of a particular community, faction, or nation.

This Skill includes all the **general** knowledge a character may have collected about any given nation, community, faction, or organization (history, geography, society, politics, laws, leaders, internal organization, customs and way of life, etc.). There is a specific Skill for each type of organization. It may be:

- **A major or minor nation** (examples: Hegemony, Red League, Coral Republic, Equinox, Rift States, etc.).

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- **A faction** (examples: Fellowship of the Watchers, Mercenaries, Pirates, etc.).
- **A religious organization** (examples: Cult of the Trident, Fellowship of the Black Sun, etc.).
- **A criminal group** (examples: Smugglers, Organized crime, etc.).
- **Or even an ancient faction,** such as the Geneticians or the Azure Alliance, for a character interested in the secrets of the past.

Only the Skill corresponding to the character's community of origin starts at a +3 Base Level. The other Skills suffer a Penalty at the Base Level depending on their nature: +0 for a known, important, or geographically close community, -3 for a less-known, minor, or farther community, X for an unknown community, a secret organization (the Fellowship of the Black Sun, for example), or an ancient power (the Geneticians).

These Skills may be considered limiting as soon as the attempted action requires the specific knowledge of a particular community. Skills that are most often limited are *Eloquence/Persuasion* (for a speech based on a particular community's ideas or customs), *Bureaucracy* (for specific administrative procedures), and *Education/General knowledge* (for really specific facts about a particular community).

This Skill can include the knowledge of social/professional environments, such as knowledge of the armies of a particular country, diplomatic circles, etc.

Languages/Dialects

There is a Skill for each language (written, spoken, or other). These Skills are rarely used directly in a Test, but rather they indicate the general level of knowledge for a character of a specific language:

- **Levels 1–5:** basic vocabulary ; the character can only conduct a basic conversation ("Hello... Me mechanical problem. You to help me?").
- **Levels 6–10:** elementary knowledge ; the character can follow a simple conversation ("Ah, you're looking for a mechanic? Your ship needs repairs? Yes, I can help you...").
- **Levels 11–15:** advanced knowledge ; the character can follow a normal conversation ("Thank-you, I'm looking for a handy person to fix a torpedo tube of Hegemonian make, not exactly... uh... legal. These machines, it's great when they work, but when they break down, the repairs are always very complicated...").
- **Levels 15–20:** mastery of a language ; the character can follow an erudite or highly technical conversation ("That's normal; it can sometimes be difficult to procure the exact technical specifications, especially for sensitive equipment like that. As it happens, I know some specialists who work in several parallel networks and they often have access to retired Hegemonian military equipment, hijacked at the source by a fearless trafficker. Are you interested?").
- **Levels 21–25:** perfect mastery. The character is bilingual and speaks without any foreign accent ("Yes, that'd be great, it's been months that my friends and I have been on the lookout for the guy who stole our stuff. Fancy going for a little ride? What do you mean you didn't know we were Hegemonians? Is it supposed to be tattooed on our faces?").

Rather than turning to a Test every time, base your decision on these samples to determine the type of discussion that a character can follow or the complexity of the texts that he can understand.

Furthermore, the language Skills are considered as Limiting, since the character wants to communicate in a language other than their own (notably by using Skills such as *Leadership*, *Eloquence/Persuasion*, *Socializing/Seduction*, etc.) or to study documents written in a foreign language (by using Skills such as *Bureaucracy*, *Cryptography*, *Education/General knowledge*, *Finding information*, *Science/Specialized knowledge*).

Finally, the language Skills have an interaction that is entirely their own. Effectively, the majority of languages have a clearly identifiable origin: an older language called a "root language." Because of the links that exist between two languages, a character can use a Skill developed in a root language to understand and use its derivative languages, but in this case the level of Skill is divided by two.

Note on the native language of characters: there isn't really a Skill for the native language of characters (the language Skill only deals with foreign or specialized languages). The fluency of characters in their native language, whether it takes the form of oral or written expression, is determined by their level of *Eloquence/Persuasion* and/or *Education/General knowledge*. However, if you need a quantified indicator (to apply the rule to root languages, mostly), you can consider that a character masters his native language at a level equal to **10 + level of mastery in *Education/General knowledge*** (note that this level of mastery may be negative, because this Skill possesses a Base Level of -3).

Languages (Ancient) [. . .] (Languages/Dialects)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Limiting Skill for: any action requiring use of these languages or the study of ancient texts.

- **Arkonian (X):** language of the Geneticists (root(s): unknown).
- **Azuran (X):** the ancient official language of the Azuran Alliance (root(s): Azurean).
- **Azurean (X):** noble Azuran (root(s): languages of the ancient past).
- **Gatean (X):** ancient language spoken at Gateo (root(s): Latin).

Languages (Foreign) [...] (NP) (Lang./Dial.)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

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Limiting Skill for: any action requiring communication or reading documents.

- **Amanean (X):** language of Amazonia (root(s) : unknown).
- **Azran (X):** very rare language (root(s): Azuran dialect).
- **Gashklarian (X):** ancient language still spoken on Nova (root(s): languages of the ancient past).
- **Isitacian (X):** language of the Coral Republic (root(s): Azuran).
- **Lesarachian (X):** language of the community of Leviathan, mixing in whistling and soft cries with speech (root(s): unknown).
- **Lexzion (X):** language spoken on Pull (root(s): Arkonian).
- **Neo-azuran (X):** the most common language under the oceans (root(s): Azuran).
- **Nezraisian (X):** language of the Cult of the Prophet of Sirte (root(s): language of the ancient past).
- **Oceanian (X):** language of the Mediterranean Union (root(s): Azuran).
- **Olakarian (X):** language of the Red League (root(s): Azuran)
- **Olosakian (X):** language of the Hegemony (root(s): Azuran).
- **Ossyrian (X):** language of the Rift States (root(s): Azuran).
- **Renarean (X):** language of the Polar Alliance (root(s): Azuran).
- **Ternasetian (X):** language of the Ternasets ; some swear this is the oldest language in the world (root(s): unknown).
- **Trashanes (X):** language spoken at Kryss, Pushkar, and Suvadi (root(s): Arkonian and languages of the ancient past).

Languages (Specialized) [. . .] (NP) (Lang./Dial.)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Limiting Skill for: any action requiring the use of these languages or to read documents.

These languages are specific to a social group, a profession, and certain categories of individuals or even certain creatures.

- **Absolanese (X):** the language of diplomats (root(s): Neo-azuran).
- **Burrower (X):** the language of the Burrowers
- **Enefid (X):** the jargon of spies; this language is closer to a code (root(s): none).
- **Exonese (X):** the language of dolphins; it has no written form (root(s): none).
- **Burrowers:** The written form of this language uses both engravings and sound, and can only be read with the fingers, and, even then, the deeper meaning of the text will not be understood. It is necessary to use a special piece of equipment, similar to an active sonar, or a mutation like that of the Burrowers. The oral form requires the use of a special radio device, because this language is based on the modulation of certain waves (root(s): none).
- **Inesisian (X):** the language of the priests of the Trident (root(s): Azuran).
- **Ithraxian (X):** the language of pirates (root(s): Neo-azuran).
- **Klanese (X):** the language of miners (root(s): Neo-azuran).
- **Levean (X):** the language of the Leviathans and the majority of mammals. Requires the use of a radio device. No written form (root(s): none).
- **Metalan (X):** the language of the educated class (root(s): mix of Isitac and Azurean).
- **Neolan (X):** the language of engineers (root(s): Azuran).
- **Sign Language:** allows dialogue by sign (root(s): none).
- **Sirsian:** language of the slums, thieves, and beggars (root(s): Neo-azuran).
- **Solean (X):** the language of commerce, widely spread (root(s): Azuran).

Leadership (Communication/Social Relationships)

Associated Attributes: WIL/PRE

This Skill accounts for the authority and leadership of a character. It's not only about his ability to command and impose his will upon individuals under his authority, but also more broadly his aptitude to take control of a group and behave like a true leader. In a more general manner, this Skill can also be used to manage a group, to influence its decisions, to maintain its cohesion or motivation, or to avoid internal dissensions.

Note: *in naval combat, the level of Leadership of the captain also determines the Initiative of the vessel.*

Martial Arts [. . .] • (Combat (Melee))

Associated Attributes: COO/ADA

Partially limiting Skill for: the use of the special martial art techniques with others melee skills (see **Martial arts and special techniques** page 223)

Note: in zero gravity and underwater environments, the Combat Skills are limited by the level of *Zero G maneuvering* or *Underwater maneuvering*.

This Skill includes all the special combat techniques related to training and particular maneuvers. Each technique has a Skill:

- **Wrestling (-3):** hand-to-hand combat, based on locks, pins, strangle holds, takedowns, etc. This form of combat is useful when the two adversaries are fighting on the ground or underwater.
- **Defense Techniques (-3):** use of specific defensive techniques, as well as all self-defense maneuvers (for example, escaping from grappling holds or strangle holds).

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- **Offense Techniques (-3):** attack techniques, notably strikes (with any part of the body: hands, elbows, feet, knees, shins, head, etc.). The successful use of this Skill allows the Player to increase the amount of damage caused or to deliver special strikes: stun, knock out, etc.

Mastery of the Polaris Echo (X) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: INT/WIL

This is one of the rare Skills that a character can use in the Polaris Flux. It also helps to define the knowledge that a character has of this mysterious dimension, as well as the capacity to survive there. It can, for example, be used to find your way in the Flux universe, to find psychic lighthouses or specific places there, and also to get away from a possible pursuer when in the Flux. Finally, *Mastery of the Polaris echo* also allows a character to escape the Polaris Flux. See paragraph **Polaris Flux** on page 265 in the chapter **Polaris Effect**, for more information.

Mastery of the Polaris Effect (X) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: WIL/WIL

This Skill allows a character to voluntarily unleash the energy of the Polaris Effect and to control it, so that he can use its powers. It also allows a character to avoid accidental releases. Go to the chapter dedicated to the Polaris Effect for more information.

Note: to develop this Skill, you must buy the Polaris Effect Advantage.

Mechanics [. . .] (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisite: *Electronics* 5, most of the time (or else the character will not be able to repair or improve complex automated systems and embedded electronics; he will only be capable of operating the simplest of systems).

This Skill allows the character to repair and maintain vehicles and machinery. Each type of vehicle is the object of a particular Skill.

- **Exo-armors**
- **Ships/Underwater Fighters**
- **Atmospheric Fighters**
- **Underground Vehicles**
- **Ground Vehicles**, etc.

In the category of machinery is the ***Generators/Life Support Systems***, which deals with the repair and maintenance of equipment necessary for life in underwater structures, notably the stations (power generators, air recyclers, heating systems, etc.).

Meditation (X) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: WIL/WIL

This Skill allows a character to empty his mind, to concentrate, or to rest. A character who successfully uses meditation becomes invulnerable to outside influences (noise, mental pressure, etc.). He can recuperate from the effects of Fatigue twice as quickly as usual (*CRB2* 203). He can also meditate to reflect on a problem. The Difficulty depends on the complexity of the problem and the time necessary can generally be counted in hours. At the end of meditation, as a function of the Success Margin obtained, the GM may give hints to the Player to help him with a particular problem (new ideas, clues toward a solution, memory or new insight into the details or forgotten events, etc.).

Mental Shield (X) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: WIL/WIL

This Skill allows a character to reinforce one of his mental Attributes (Willpower, Intelligence, Adaptation) against any aggression that might affect them (mental attacks, hypnosis, subliminal images, interrogation, or any other action directly affecting the mind of an individual). The Success Modifier indicates the bonus from which the reinforced Attribute now benefits. The effect lasts a number of minutes equal to the Mastery Level that the character possesses. Nevertheless, he must wait at least an hour to use the Skill again, lest he risks having to make a shock resistance test (-2 by cumulative use without waiting one hour).

Note: the Attributes' bonuses do not apply to the Base Skill Levels.

Navigation † (X) (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10.

This Skill, compulsory to direct a vessel with no visibility, allows you to determine your situation in a specific fashion and to calculate a route. The Success (or Failure) Margin indicates the accuracy (or lack of) of the navigator. Note that *Navigation* is first and foremost about travels over great distances on a vast geographic scale: between two stations, for example, or between two navigation points relatively far from each other (say, over several kilometers). A good Success Margin makes it possible to arrive at a destination sooner; for instance, by taking advantage of good marine currents, or to avoid meeting the wrong kinds of people (while sailing through waters controlled by a hostile armed force or swarmed with pirates). In the case of a Failure, the vessel can get lost (or have to face an unfortunate event: pirate attack, underwater phenomenon, etc.). For a long trip (crossing over a sea, an ocean, bypassing a continent or the territory of a major nation), the GM can definitely ask for several *Navigation* Tests.

Note: With shorter distances (less than a few kilometers), only the *Piloting* and *Orientation* Skills are useful (see the descriptions of the latter).

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Observation (Survival/Outside)

Associated Attributes: PER/WIL

This Skill allows a character to carefully analyze his environment, to attempt to recall fine details, indicators, anomalies, a familiar face or the particular behavior of an individual in a crowd, etc. This is a truly active search, not just an instinctive perception of their surroundings (which depends on the Perception Attribute). This Skill also measures a character's vigilance, his ability to automatically notice unusual or suspicious elements.

This Skill can be limited by the *Knowledge of a specific environment* (see above), if the character is in a particular environment (where he might more easily notice an unusual element).

Onboard Weapons/Artillery (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

This Skill covers the use of weapons systems used aboard vehicles (cannons, torpedoes, rocket launchers, etc.).

Orientation (Survival/Outside)

Associated Attributes: PER/ADA

This Skill allows a character to orient himself and travel in his environment, avoid getting lost, relocate his trail, to keep an awareness of his position and movements, and even to avoid dangerous zones and undesirable encounters. This Skill is limited most of the time by the *Knowledge of a specific environment* (see above), because the character must know the specifics of each environment to be able to orient himself effectively.

This Skill also allows a character to orient himself on a map (on foot, in diving armor, or in a vehicle), in an unknown territory or a complex environment (the abandoned ruins of a large station, the wreck of a large ship, an underground maze, or in undersea mountains, etc.). The frequency and the Difficulty of Tests depend mainly on the complexity of the area and whether the character does or doesn't have a map of his surroundings. Successes allow for rapid and efficient movement; Failures waste a great deal of time. In the case of a Catastrophe, characters are completely lost or have suffered an unpleasant event (their ship might crash into a cliff, for example).

Note: orientation only concerns localized movements. To calculate the trajectory between two stations, on the scale of a sea or an ocean, it's necessary to use the *Navigation* Skill.

Pickpocket (-3) (Stealth/Subterfuge)

Associated Attributes: COO/ADA

This Skill allows a character to quietly steal objects from the pockets of other characters or even from merchants' displays. The Difficulty of the Test depends on the size of the object being stolen and its placement. A target who is wary has the right to a Perception Test in opposition to the *Pickpocket* Test.

Piloting [. . .] (Piloting)

Associated Attributes: variable (see below)

This Skill allows the piloting of a specific type of vehicle, each one being the object of a particular Skill:

- **Underwater fighters (INT/ADA, X) †:** allows piloting of an underwater fighter. **Prerequisites:** *Athletics* 10, *Education/General knowledge* 10, *Light ships* 10.
- **Atmospheric fighters (INT/ADA, X) †:** allows piloting of a fighter on the Surface. **Prerequisites:** *Athletics* 10, *Education/General knowledge* 10.
- **Light ships (INT/INT, X) †:** the character who possesses this Skill is familiar with all the procedures of piloting a light ship, such as a small civil transport or patrol ship. **Prerequisites:** *Education/General knowledge* 7.
- **Heavy ships (INT/INT, X) †:** this Skill allows the piloting of a heavy ship, such as a civil cargo ship or a heavy tonnage military ship (frigates, cruisers, or destroyers). **Prerequisites:** *Light ships* 10.
- **Spacecraft (INT/INT, X) †:** gives the character knowledge of how to pilot shuttles and other space vehicles. **Prerequisites:** *Education/General knowledge* 10.
- **Underground vehicles (INT/ADA, X):** gives the character knowledge of how to pilot underground patrol vehicles and drills.
- **Ground vehicles (PER/ADA):** gives the character the ability to pilot of all kinds of vehicles that move on wheels, treads, sliders, or with the help of mechanical feet, whether they are able to move underwater or on the surface.
- **Underwater scooters (PER/ADA):** gives the character knowledge of how to use scooters and hydro-propulsors.

Polaris Powers (X) (Special Skills)

Associated Attributes: INT/WIL

Each Polaris Effect Power is the subject of a particular Skill. Their usage is detailed in the chapter **Polaris Effect**, page 248.

Remote piloting (-3) (Piloting)

Associated Attributes: INT/ADA

This Skill covers the use of weapons and equipment remotely controled through an electronic or mechanical interface. It serves just as well to pilot a long-distance drone as to control a wire-guided torpedo.

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Science/Specialized Knowledge [. . .] (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10, plus eventually other Skills (see descriptions).

This group of Skills comprises all science (including the social sciences) and specialized theoretical knowledge. Each discipline is the object of a particular Skill, for example:

- **Administration/Management (X):** knowledge of account and resource management for a corporation (or whatever kind of organization), but also the techniques for commercial fraud.
- **Arms/Weapons systems (X):** knowledge of arms, munitions, weapons systems (mounted on top of vehicles), relevant technologies, etc.
- **Astrophysics/Astronomy (X):** knowledge concerning space and spatial physics. **Prerequisites:** *Physics/Chemistry* 10.
- **Biology/Physiology (X):** knowledge of the biology of living organisms.
- **Botany (X):** knowledge of plants and their ecosystems. This Skill also allows for the diagnosis of diseases affecting flora and knowledge of the appropriate remedies. **Prerequisites:** *Biology/Physiology* 7.
- **Criminology (X):** knowledge of crime scene analysis techniques (ballistics, fingerprints and trace evidence, microfibers, etc.). **Prerequisites:** according to the technique being used.
- **Economy (X):** knowledge of economic sciences and theories.
- **Finance (X):** knowledge of of financial and banking systems and the capacity to carry out good stock operations and judicious financial investments.
- **Geography (X):** study of the geography of nations (society, economy, etc.).
- **Geology (X):** knowledge concerning the planet's physical geography, the make-up of the earth's crust, minerals, and volcanic activity. **Prerequisites:** *Physics/Chemistry* 5.
- **History/Archeology (X):** knowledge of the history of nations, study of archeological remains.
- **Law/Legislation (X):** knowledge of the law, the legal code, and the functions of justice.
- **Medicine (X):** knowledge of the illnesses and problems that can affect human beings, whatever their nature, and the treatments that can cure them. **Prerequisites:** *Biology/Physiology* 7.
- **Pharmacology (X):** knowledge of medications, but also drugs and poisons. **Prerequisites:** *Biology/Physiology* 5, *Physics/Chemistry* 5. More simplified versions of this Skill, simply called *Knowledge of poisons* (X) and *Knowledge of drugs* (X), and limited to the practical knowledge of these specific products, also exist. These Skills do not have any prerequisites.
- **Physics/Chemistry (X):** study of the physical properties of matter.
- **Political science (X):** knowledge of nations and their political systems, global geopolitics, etc. **Prerequisites:** *Geography* 7, *History/Archaeology* 5.
- **Psychology(X):** study of the human mind and behavior.
- **Sociology (X):** study of the social sciences.
- **Zoology (X):** knowledge of animals and their ecosystems. This Skill also allows for the diagnosis of illnesses affecting animals and knowledge of the appropriate remedies. **Prerequisites:** *Biology/Physiology* 7.
- **Etc.**

Note: to determine if a character knows a basic or very general piece of information, you may use the *Education/General knowledge* Skill. This can, however, never replace a real science, and the appropriate Skill should be used when the subject becomes a little more specialized.

Security Systems (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Electronics* 5, most of the time, or the character will be incapable of dealing with more complex systems.

This Skill allows for the installation, detection, and neutralization of all kinds of security systems. It also permits a character to pick simple locks or to force electronic locks. The Difficulty depends on the complexity of the system. In the vast majority of cases, the character needs an adapted device (lock-picking tools, electronic lock-pick, or code-breaker for electronic locks, etc.).

Sharpshooting • (-3) (Combat (Shooting))

Associated Attributes: PER/WIL

Limiting Skill for: *Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles*, for precision shooting with a scope.

Note : all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests when used underwater. All others ranged weapons have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests when used underwater.

This skill limits the level of all *Shoulder-fired weapons/Rifles* used for precision shooting that require the use of a scope and specific knowledge in precision shooting. But you must use this skill when you operate a marksman weapon, a long-range precision special rifle like the Cougar, Nerid 650 or Sniper AV Heca.

Shoulder-Fired Weapons/Rifles (Combat (Shooting))

Associated Attributes: COO/PER

Note : all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests when used underwater. All others ranged weapons have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests when used underwater.

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This Skill allows the character to use weapons such as rifles, gauge rifles, assault rifles. Weapons used for precision shooting are limited by the *Sharpshooting* Skill.

Sign Language [...] (x) (Languages/Dialects)

Associated Attributes: COO/PER

There are numerous sign languages. Most of them were developed by particular factions whose members wanted to be able to exchange information in a discreet manner. For example, there's the sign language used by the military or security forces, or even that of diplomats. Each sign language corresponds with a Skill.

Socializing/Seduction (Comm./Soc. Rel.)

Associated Attributes: PRE/PRE

This Skill allows the character to seduce others **in a broad sense :** it's not only about romantic seduction but also about being seen in a good light by someone, and building relationships in a community or a group in order to gain the trust of its members. If the target has no reason to distrust the character, you can solve the seduction attempt with a normal Test. If the target is cautious or reluctant, you must perform an Opposed Test between the character's Skill and the target's Willpower. The character can, on the other hand, suffer a penalty or benefit from a bonus to his Test, depending on the perceived honest nature of his proposals.

Soundscan Analysis (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/ADA

This Skill allows a character to interpret the information transmitted by a detection device, such as a radar, sonar, or scanner.

Special Weapons (melee) [. . .] (Combat (Melee))

Associated Attributes: according to the weapon (usually STR/COO or COO/COO)

Note: in zero gravity and underwater environments, the Combat Skills are limited by the level of *Zero G maneuvering* or *Underwater maneuvering*.

This Skill allows the use of weapons that must be handled in a very specific way, such as whips, chains, lassos, nets, grappling hooks, etc. Each Special Weapon has a specific Skill. Depending on the rarity of this weapon or its exotic aspect, this Skill may be considered as *Exclusive* (starting Mastery Level: X).

Special Weapons (shooting) [. . .] (Combat (Shooting))

Associated Attributes: depending on the weapon (most of the time, COO/PER or STR/COO)

Note : all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests when used underwater. All others ranged weapons have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests when used underwater.

This Skill allows the character to use a weapon with very specific handling, such as a flame-thrower (STR/COO), the grenade launchers (COO/PER) or the hybrid wrist launcher (COO/PER). Each special weapon has a specific Skill, which often happens to be *Exclusive*.

Spying/Surveillance (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10, *Electronics* 3.

This Skill covers the various techniques of spying and counter-spying, based on the installation and use of specific equipment (microscopic tech, spy cameras, listening systems, communication jammers, etc.). It also allows the character to detect, neutralize, or trick these systems.

Stealth/Silent Movement • (Stealth/Subterfuge)

Associated Attributes: PER/ADA

Limiting Skill for: any action that must take place without noise.

This Skill allows a character to move without noise and without being noticed. Used as a Limiting Skill, this also allows a character to take a discreet action in silence: get rid of a sentry, pick a door lock, deactivate a security system, sabotage an installation... This Skill is often used in an Opposed Test against the Perception of the character you're trying to fool.

Strategy † (-3) (Knowledge)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10.

This Skill allows a character to direct the action in a conflict on a global scale. This mainly consists of managing the combination of military, economic, political, psychological, and human resources for a nation or an organization, with the goal of winning a war (as opposed to tactics, which makes it possible to win a combat or a battle). This Skill may also be used to manage major crises or geopolitical conflicts.

Surgery † (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Necessary Prerequisites: *Medicine* 10, see *Bionics/Cybertechnology* 5 (for implantation of cybernetic equipment).

This Skill allows a character to conduct surgical interventions. The Difficulty of the action depends on the technical level of the operation.

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SURVIVAL (X) (SURVIVAL/OUTSIDE)

Associated Attributes: ADA/WIL

This Skill allows a character to survive in a hostile environment, to find food and water, to make fire, to build shelter, to protect himself from cold, to fashion improvised tools, etc. This Skill is mostly limited by the *Knowledge of a specific environment* (see above), because the character must know the specifics of each environment to be able to survive there.

TACTICS [. . .] (KNOWLEDGE)

Associated Attributes: INT/ADA

This Skill allows a character to direct combat units (or similar) engaged in a military operation and to give them effective plans of action so they can gain the upper hand over the opposing forces (movements, maneuvers, and positioning on the field of battle, specific tactics of attack and defense, ruses, etc.). Be aware that this Skill only concerns short-length operations (a bout of combat, a battle), and thus differs from *Strategy*, which allows a character to oversee a conflict in its entirety. There is a Skill for each type of tactical operation:

- **Naval combat (-3):** this concerns combat between submarine ships (whatever their size).
- **Underground combat:** this concerns military operations conducted in an underground environment.
- **Ground combat:** this concerns military operations conducted on the Surface and satellite weapons (see below).
- **Commando operations:** this concerns specialized operations conducted by a small group with a specific objective (infiltration or extraction, sabotage or assassination, seizing control of a small station or a ship, neutralization of terrorists or hostage-takers, etc.), or for combat situated in a difficult environment ("urban" combat, for example, in the big cities or large underwater stations).

SATELLITE WEAPONS

The *Tactics (Ground Combat)* Skill also allows the use of satellite weapons controlled by orbital stations. To order a shot fired from satellite weapons, you must make contact with an orbital station and specify the coordinates for a target. The weapons are not available all the time; it depends on the position of the satellite in space. The Difficulty of this Test usually depends on the meteorological conditions on the Surface. This Skill effectively allows the character, thanks to a good understanding of these weapons, to try to calculate the most precise area possible where they can strike without being caught in the storm. Take note that to know how to use these weapons won't suffice, you must also have the authority...

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Technical Engineering [. . .] † (X) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/INT

Prerequisites: *Education/General knowledge* 10, and see below.

These Skills allow a character to invent all sorts of products or highly technological equipment. Here are several examples:

- **Architecture/Civil Engineering:** design of stations and underwater cities.
- **Bionics/Cybertechnology:** study of biological mechanisms and the industrial applications that might follow from them, human-machine interfaces, cybernetic replacement body parts, etc. **Prerequisites:** *Biology/Physiology* 10.
- **Biotechnology/Genetic Engineering:** knowledge of the technological procedures that can be applied to living organisms, notably genetic manipulations. **Prerequisites:** *Biology/Physiology* 10.
- **Electronics/Computing:** invention of electronic equipment and computing devices. **Prerequisites:** *Electronics* 10, *Computing* 10.
- **Nanotechnology:** knowledge of nanotechnology and its applications in daily life. **Prerequisites:** *Physics/Chemistry* 10.
- **Naval Architecture:** design of ships.
- **Robotics:** knowledge about robotics. **Prerequisites:** *Electronics* 10, *Computing* 10.
- **Programming:** invention of computing programs. **Prerequisites:** *Computing* 10.
- **Telecommunications:** invention of communications systems. **Prerequisites:** *Electronics*10, *Computing* 10.
- **Etc.**

Note: the operations of basic repair and maintenance can be affected with the Skills for *Electronics*, *Computing*, *Mechanics*, etc.

Throwing Weapons (-3) (Combat (Shooting))

Associated Attributes: COO/PER

Note : all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests when used underwater. All others ranged weapons have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests when used underwater.

This Skill allows the use of throwing weapons, such as throwing knives, spears, etc.

Training (-3) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: WIL/PRE

This Skill can be used to train domestic animals or tame wild creatures.

Traps (-3) (Techniques)

Associated Attributes: INT/PER

This Skill allows a character to build and set traps (of all kinds: mechanical, explosive, etc.), but also to detect and defuse them. The Success Margin may allow for the improvement of the trap's efficacy, but also to hide it better, imposing a penalty on the *Detection* Test.

Underwater Maneuvering • (Physical ability)

Associated Attributes: STR/COO

Limiting Skill for: some physical actions performed underwater.

This Skill makes it possible to move underwater: quickly turn over, execute a difficult move, reach the desired location, move through a complex environment (maze, wreck, etc.). It completely replaces the *Acrobatics/Balance* Skill in an underwater environment and also limits the levels of Skills requiring a certain physical coordination (notably Combat Skills). **The limiting aspect of this Skill does not apply to underwater creatures, nor to Hybrids, who are perfectly adapted to the aquatic environment.**

Note: characters who are operating an exo-armor must use the *Underwater armor maneuvering* Skill (see description below) instead of this one.

Zero-G Maneuvering • (Physical ability)

Associated Attributes: COO/ADA

Limiting Skill for: any physical action executed in weightlessness needing a certain physical coordination.

This Skill makes it possible to operate in zero gravity: quickly turn around, perform a difficult move, reach the desired location, move through a complex environment (maze, wreck, etc.). It completely replaces the *Acrobatics/Balance* Skill in a space environment and also limits the levels of the Skills requiring a certain physical coordination (notably Combat Skills).

Note: characters who operate exo-armor must use the *Space exo-armor maneuvering* Skill (see description below) instead of this one.

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CHAPTER THREE

GAME SYSTEM

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CHAPTER 3.1

TESTS & ACTIONS

"A system? What system? I just wanna blow that guy up! What? What dice? Ok, pass me the dice then, I'm gonna blast him. What do you mean I missed? Man, this sucks!

—A Player

In this chapter, you will find the essential rules of the game system for the *Polaris RPG*. Don't forget that this game system is only a tool and not a collection of rigid rules. Feel free, therefore, to ignore or change certain rules, if that improves the atmosphere of the game.

OPTIONAL AND ADVANCED RULES

Gamemasters, you will find optional and advanced rules in **Core Rulebook: 2** *that add to these basic rules. You only need the basic rules to play a quick and simple game of the Polaris RPG, and you can always trust in common sense and improvise a little, if required.*

Note: the game system for *Polaris RPG* requires almost exclusively 6-, 10-, and 20-sided dice. A few small tokens, to use as markers, can also come in handy.

USING ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

WHEN SHOULD YOU USE A TEST?

Most of the everyday actions that your character will have to undertake will not require a Test: walking, talking, opening an unlocked door, etc. If an action cannot fail, then it will always succeed (and vice versa—if an action is impossible, it will always fail). On the other hand, if the outcome of an action is uncertain, then you will need to use a Skill Test (or an Attribute Test, but they work the same way). You would be forgiven for thinking that a "very easy" action would not require a Test, as the character is almost certain to succeed. That would certainly be true in a *normal* situation; in other words, when the character is working calmly, taking his time, and using the right tools if necessary. But then not all situations are *normal*. Some situations are in fact particularly stressful, like a fight or an urgent situation where time is critical (for example, making an improvised repair on a

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ship that is currently taking on water left, right, and center...). In these cases, panic and precipitation can combine to jeopardize the outcome of a seemingly simple action. In these conditions, the Test becomes a logical step, even if it is for an action that would be impossible to fail in normal conditions.

SKILL TESTS

As far as the game is concerned, the Success Probability of an action based on a Skill is equal to its *Global Skill Level*, meaning:

Base Skill Level (depends on the Attribute) + Mastery level of the Skill

Reminder: the Skills with a level of "X" cannot be tested (see **X: Exclusive Skills**, on page 99). These skills are automatically doomed to fail.

ATTRIBUTE TESTS

It is sometimes the case that a Test is not directly linked to a Skill but directly to an Attribute. In this case, the point is to test the character's natural ability more than any form of learned skills. For example, you can test the Strength of a character, to see if he will be able to lift a very heavy object, or his level of Perception, to see if he can detect a specific sound or smell. In this case you simply use the level of the Attribute in question.

RESOLVING TESTS

RANDOM TESTS

Note for the GM: the Tests presented in this section are resolved with a D20. For this reason, they are called *Random Tests*, contrary to the *Non-Random Tests*, described later on, which are a simpler method of resolving tests. You can certainly ignore this method and only play with Random Tests.

DIFFICULTY OF THE ACTION

While the Player checks the level of the Skill or the Attribute to be tested, the Gamemaster (GM) determines the Difficulty of the action. There isn't really any defined rule for this, other than that of basic common sense. As a convention, we will use the following Difficulty Scale, and if one of the terms in the table on the right stands out as a perfect description of the action, then it is quite probably the one you should use.

As you can see, each Difficulty level is associated with a modifier (a bonus or a penalty), to apply to the character's Base Success Probability to obtain the Total Success Probability of the action:

Total Success Probability = Base Success Probability + Difficulty Modifier

The Skill or the Attribute used and the Difficulty are the only elements you need to know to perform a Test. In fact, in the rest of the book, the necessary Tests are often summarized as follows: *Skill* (Difficulty or bonus/penalty), for example, *Climbing* (Difficult or -5).

DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF THE ACTION	DIFFICULTY MODIFIER
Extremely easy	+10
Very easy	+7
Easy	+5
Fairly easy	+3
Average	+0
Fairly difficult	-3
Difficult	-5
Very difficult	-7
Extremely difficult	-10
Almost impossible	-13
Superhuman	-15
Heroic	-20

TWEAKING THE MODIFIERS

The numbers in the table above are based on a scale that is frequent in this game system, with values usually fixed at 0, 3, 5, 7, and 10, per level of 10 points (so you would continue with 13, 15, 17, etc.). This progression and these reference numbers are easy to remember, but you are, of course, free to use your own modifiers. If for this or that action you feel that a bonus of +3 is a bit too generous and that a +1 or +2 would do just fine... just do it!

GM: KEEP THE DIFFICULTY SCALE TO YOURSELF!

When you are resolving a Test, never hesitate to keep the Difficulty Scale secret now and again, especially when the levels are not easy to guess. You can give your Players vague indications ("It looks like it should be pretty easy," "It looks like it's really hard") without giving them the actual figures. Depending on their Base Success Probability and their die rolls, you will work out the results of the Test yourself. A little suspense never hurts (and in case you need to, it will make it easier for you to "cheat" and work out the results to fit in with your plans...).

You should also feel free to resolve certain Tests in your Players' stead (Perception Tests, for example), especially in situations where their character shouldn't know what is going on (an ambush, for example).

ROLLING THE DICE

To work out the result of a Test, roll a D20:

- If the result of the roll **is equal to or less than** the Success Probability of the Test, the attempted **action has succeeded**.
- If the result of the roll **is higher than** the Success Probability of the Test, the attempted **action has failed**.

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In both cases, the roll may well produce a special result: a Critical Success or Critical Failure (see below).

Note: even if the chances of success are equal to or higher than 20, you must still roll the die. This is because the result indicates the Success Margin (and can also produce, in certain cases, a Critical Success).

SUCCESS OR FAILURE MARGINS

The Success Margin of a successful Test is **equal to the result of the roll** (this is a direct reading: the aim is therefore to roll *the highest possible score that is still below* the Success Probability score). The Degree of Success in the corresponding table below indicates the result of the action. This Success Margin can be improved by a **Critical Success** (see page 202).

The Failure Margin of a failed Test is **equal to the number of points over the character's Success Probability** (taking into account the Difficulty Modifier). The Degree of Failure in the corresponding table below indicates the result of the action. This Failure Margin can be worsened by a **Critical Failure** (see below).

The higher the margin, the more the success is significant or the more the failure is crushing, as indicated in the tables below:

SUCCESS MARGIN	DEGREE OF SUCCESS	SUCCESS MODIFIER
1–2	Just barely	+0
3–4	Decent	+1
5–6	Fairly good	+2
7–9	Good	+3
10–12	Very good	+4
13–14	Excellent	+5
15–19	Perfect	+6
20–24	Extraordinary	+7
25–34	Heroic	+8
35+	Legendary	+9

FAILURE MARGIN	DEGREE OF FAILURE	FAILURE MODIFIER
1–2	Just barely	+0
3–4	Mediocre	-1
5–6	Fairly bad	-2
7–9	Bad	-3
10–12	Very bad	-4
13–14	Terrible	-5
15–19	Catastrophic*	-6
20–24		-7
25–34		-8
35+		-9
** Risk of Catastrophe*		

The Degrees of Success or Failure are descriptive terms. Among other things, they allow the Gamemaster to describe more precisely the result of the action: they are above all a guide and a narration tool to help develop the atmosphere. The GM is, of course, free to improvise as she wishes based on these terms; for example, rewarding a character who manages a particularly successful action with a favorable event (or by inflicting a negative event in the opposite case).

The "Just barely" level of Success can be particularly interesting: the character succeeds in his action but only manages it by the skin of his teeth, and this can have unexpected consequences or side effects that are not necessarily pleasant. For example, after jumping over the opening of a deep hole, he catches the opposite side at the last minute and finds himself hanging over a void. Or maybe, although he managed to successfully pick a lock, he broke his lock picks in the process. Then again, after escaping from a torpedo, he scrapes against a rock and damages his vessel or his armor... The GM should still bear in mind that the character did succeed in his action—this is just to add a little spice to the game, not to overwhelm the characters!

Generally speaking, keep it in mind that a good Success Margin improves the **quality** of the result of the action or the **speed** at which the character performs it. A very good margin can even allow a character to improve both of these aspects at the same time! Therefore, repairing a vehicle with an "Extraordinary" Success can mean that the character managed to finish the work in half the time he had planned, or that the quality of the repairs is such that they have even improved the vehicle's abilities for a while. Of course, if the result is a Failure, the opposite effect is applied: the character wastes time and/or his failure has negative consequences. For example, failing an Intimidation Test with a "Terrible" Failure could result in the spread of bad rumors and mockery about the character all around the station... However, one of the results be interpreted in a particular way: the "Catastrophic" Failure (see **Catastrophes** below).

The last column of the table shows the **Failure or Success Modifiers**, which depend on the margin obtained and are used in some of the game system rules. They act either as a bonus or a penalty. **Whenever the Modifiers are taken into account, it will be mentioned in the rules.** For example, the Success Modifier is added as a bonus to the damage inflicted in combat, after a successful attack.

Note: be careful not to mix up the **Success Margin** and the **Success Modifiers**. In some cases, the former will be used, and in other cases it will be the latter.

CRITICAL SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

CRITICAL SUCCESS

If the result of the roll is **exactly the same value as the Total Success Probability** (thus taking into account the Difficulty Modifier), you score a *Critical Success*. In this case,

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you can add the Mastery Level (and not the Global Skill Level) to the previously obtained score to increase your Success Margin, which will probably allow you to obtain a much better result. Be careful: this refers to increasing the *Success Margin* and not the *result of the roll*; even if the final result is superior to the character's Success Probability, he has still completed his action successfully. ***Note:*** in the case of Attribute Tests (that have no Mastery Level), simply add a bonus equal to half of the level of the tested Attribute to the character's Success Margin.

CRITICAL FAILURE

If the die roll produces a "20," this is a *Critical Failure*. **In this case, roll the D20 again and add the result to the Test's original Failure Margin,** which aggravates the Degree of Failure. Warning: if the Failure Margin reaches or passes 15, the character is at risk of triggering a Catastrophe (meaning a particularly dramatic event, as d**escribed her**e).

CATASTROPHES

A Failure Margin of 15 points or more can trigger a Catastrophe, if the GM should so wish. This is the negative side effect of the Failure. For example, the character could have an accident with the vehicle he is piloting, or his weapon could jam, break, or fall on the ground during a combat, or if it was a Gambling Test he could be accused of cheating, etc. It is up to the GM to define the exact consequences of a Catastrophe, but as its name suggests, it is always a dramatic event that goes way beyond the effects of a simple Failure.

SUCCESS PROBABILITIES HIGHER THAN 20

If the Total Success Probability is equal to or higher than 20, no Critical Failure is possible (all in all, that's good news). The Player should still roll the D20 to work out his Success Margin. If he rolls a "20" then it is a Critical Success and not a Critical Failure.

IMPOSSIBLE ACTIONS

If a character's Success Probability falls below 1, the action is automatically doomed to fail. If the Gamemaster kept the Difficulty Modifier secret and if the character attempts the action, the Player should still roll a D20: the result of the roll will give the Failure Margin.

Reminder: an action that calls upon a Skill with a level that is still "X" automatically fails (the character automatically knows that the action is about to fail).

ADDING EXTRA DIFFICULTY

A Player can always decide that his character wants to attempt an action that is more difficult than the basic action, usually with the aim of getting a specific or more interesting result. For example, a character could voluntarily make an action more difficult by aiming at a specific part of his opponent's body in combat, performing the action a little faster than is planned, or searching a room without leaving a mess so that the owner doesn't realize that someone has searched their place. In this case, the GM is free to increase the Difficulty by a few degrees (an "Average" action can therefore be bumped up to "Fairly Difficult" or "Difficult"). Of course, the GM can also award that kind of bonus if the character obtains a particularly remarkable Success Margin, but it is more interesting to let the Players take the risks of their own initiative.

SECOND ATTEMPTS

A Random Test always represents a single attempt at performing an action. However, if the character fails, nothing prevents him from trying again, as long as it is technically possible. Here are a few suggestions to manage second attempts:

- **Direct consequences:** often, a Random Test leaves no place for failure and will have direct negative consequences for the character if he should fail. So, for example, to fail a Climbing Test can mean that the character has fallen and even injured himself. In this case, he may have sustained a physical Wound (twisted ankle, or even a broken limb...) that would make any further attempts difficult or even impossible.
- **The effects of stress:** stress can make second attempts more difficult, such as when the character gets annoyed or discouraged after the first time he tries and fails. If she is feeling especially mean (or if the situation calls for it!) the GM is free to increase the Difficulty of the action for each new attempt, adding a cumulative penalty of -1 for each failure (or even -3 if the situation is a particularly urgent one), or worse, by directly increasing the level of Difficulty (but that's just plain sadistic).
- **The adversaries become more wary:** in the case of Social Skills used in opposition (see "Opposed Tests" below), such as *Intimidation*, *Eloquence/Persuasion*, etc., a Failure can mean that the character was not taken seriously. In this case, it is only logical that a new attempt will be impossible or that the Difficulty will increase (as in the previous case). You can, for example, add an extra Difficulty Modifier, equal to the Failure Modifer of the previous Test (meaning that the clumsier the character becomes, the harder it is for him to win over his opponent ...).

NON-RANDOM TESTS

RANDOM OR NON-RANDOM TESTS?

In most roleplaying games, it is customary to resolve every action that can be tested by rolling the dice. Sometimes this creates situations that aren't completely logical; for example,

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we can't imagine that in *normal* conditions (the ones we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter), a character with a perfectly manageable Success Probability (between 13 and 15, for example) attempting an action with an "Average" Difficulty level (+0), still has one chance in three or four of failing that action. This is really not what we could expect from such a character, who is probably considered to be an expert according to our scale of values—with Attributes that are probably way over the average (14 or 15) and a Skill Mastery Level of roughly +10.

These advanced rules give you the possibility of separating two kinds of situations: on the one hand, the normal, average situations, where there is no place for chance and where only the character's abilities count, and on the other hand, the unusual and stressful situations, where chance can play a real part in the success or failure of an action. To simulate these two very distinct types of situations correctly, we suggest you use two very different types of Tests: Non-Random Tests and Random Tests. Remember that you already know about Random Tests; they were described previously in this chapter (see **Resolving Tests: Random Tests**).

CIRCUMSTANCES OF NON-RANDOM TESTS

If you decide to use these rules, you should consider that the Non-Random Tests apply naturally to actions that are attempted under normal conditions, meaning that the character is acting:

- **In the right conditions** (with the correct tools, in a calm place, with all the time he needs, etc.)
- **In a situation without stress** (and therefore without any need to act hurriedly, without being rushed by events, and without any psychological pressure)
- **Without being directly exposed to an event or any form of danger that would leave no margin of error, nor being subjected to the limit of a single attempt** (the character needs to be able to fiddle, experiment, try and fail several times before he succeeds).
- **To obtain an average result that matches his abilities**, without trying to "push his limits" or take any particular risk (one that could have allowed him to obtain a better result, at the risk of an extra level of danger).

These four elements are absolutely necessary for the Test to be considered as "Non Random." If one of them does not apply, the Test then becomes a "Random Test" (see the appropriate section). **If you are in any doubt as to which type of Test to use**, go for the usual Random Test rules and roll the dice.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF RANDOM TESTS

Random Tests naturally apply to actions undertaken in stressful or urgent situations; for example, in combat or any other situation where time is an issue or that presents a clear and present danger that automatically creates a psychological strain on the characters. During the Non-Random Tests mentioned above, the character has all the time in the world; he can mess up and fail several times before he succeeds, but only the end result counts, not the number of failed attempts that were required to complete the Test. Here, each attempt counts, as time is often a crucial factor. Any Failure means that the character has wasted time, and that is a problem when he is in a fight (his opponent could hit him before he can strike), during any urgent situation or even during a dangerous action that has a random outcome (making it over a gaping hole in a single jump, or trying to dodge what would certainly be a deadly blow). That last point is the perfect example of what qualifies as a Random Test, as the character can't afford to fail (not being directly exposed to a direct danger is, of course, one of the four conditions necessary for a Test to be Non Random).

DIFFICULTY OF THE ACTION

As in the case of Random Tests, the Gamemaster must define a Difficulty for the action that the character is attempting:

DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF THE ACTION	DIFFICULTY THRESHOLD
Extremely easy	1
Very easy	3
Easy	5
Fairly easy	7
Average	10
Fairly difficult	13
Difficult	15
Very difficult	17
Extremely difficult	20
Almost impossible	23
Superhuman	25
Heroic	Impossible *
** Can only apply to a Random Test*	

However, here the Difficulty is not applied via a Modifier, but by a simple, fixed value threshold.

RESOLVING A NON-RANDOM TEST

This kind of Test is really just a simple check: in a normal situation, is the character capable of accomplishing a given action? The Non-Random Test is designed to answer that simple question quickly, without **needing to roll the dice** (which, being random by nature, are not needed here). Chance has no part here; only the character's abilities are taken into account. The result of the Test is, therefore,

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relatively predictable. Either the character has the abilities required to perform the action, or he isn't capable of doing it.

To resolve a Non-Random Test, calculate the Character's Base Success Probability and compare it to the corresponding Difficulty of the action. **If the character's Success Probability is higher than or equal to the value of the Difficulty, then the Test is a Success. If not, then it's a Failure.** Note that the table of Difficulties can also be read the other way around—depending on the character's Base Success Probability, the table shows you what kind of Difficulties he can overcome to perform an action. Therefore, this is a very useful guide for the Player, too.

As much as can be avoided, **the GM should *never* reveal the Difficulty of a Non-Random Test** (see the section **GM: keep the Difficulty Scale to Yourself!** on page 201). Indeed, the only way to find out if an action is a Success or not is most often to try it anyway. The time spent trying to perform an action is also an important factor when it comes to Non-Random Tests, not only for the game but also for the game atmosphere. If failing the task immediately seems to be the obvious outcome by comparing the Success Probability and the Difficulty of the action, the Player could well refuse straight away to allow his character to waste his time on this action, which wouldn't make much sense and ruins the mood. Of course, if the action is especially difficult (see **Impossible Actions** below), the character will soon realize that any attempt is pointless.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE MARGINS

The Success Margin for a Non-Random Test is equal to the number of points over the Test's Difficulty value. The matching Degree of Success indicates the final result of the action. Moreover, it is possible to improve on this basic result: see **Taking your Time** and **Taking a Risk** below.

The Failure Margin for a Non-Random Test is equal to the number of points that were lacking to complete the action. The matching Degree of Failure indicates the final result of the action. Despite this, even in a case where he fails, the character can persevere and try to improve his performance in order to complete the action by choosing to **Take his Time** (see below). Before the Test is resolved, he can also choose from the get go to **Take a Risk**, and go all in (see below).

IMPOSSIBLE ACTIONS

Any actions that cannot be successful either by a normal Test or by using the rules **Taking your Time** or **Taking a Risk** are, of course, simply impossible to complete. The character immediately knows that this kind of action is automatically doomed to fail without even having to try.

TAKING YOUR TIME

It is always possible to take one's time in order to improve the result of an action. In addition to the basic time period required to use the Skill, each extra period of time of the same length that he takes adds a bonus of +2 to the character's Success Probability (up to a bonus of +6 for an extra three periods). The character can therefore either succeed in performing an action that was previously doomed to fail, or increase his Success Margin.

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TAKING A RISK

Even when all the conditions are favorable for a Non-Random Test, a character can always choose to **Take a risk**, and use the regular Random Test system. The aim of doing so is to save time, while also trying to improve the Success Margin (either from a good die roll, or by using the **Critical Success** rule that only applies to Random Tests). By choosing to use a Random Test, however, the character risks ending up with a Success Margin that is lower than it would have been with a regular Non-Random Test. Of course, he also takes the risk of failing (in some cases he will still be able to attempt the action again: see **Second Attempts**, page 203), or worse, ending up with a "Critical Failure."

NON RANDOM OPPOSED TESTS

If you want to, you can also use the Non-Random Tests principle to resolve an Opposed Test. This is just a quicker way of directly measuring the respective abilities of the two characters that confront each other in normal conditions. You can, for example, use this method if the suspense of a normal Random Test has no logical reason to exist, if the two characters are confronting each other under the usual conditions of a Non-Random Test (no stress, no impending danger, etc.), or if the result of the confrontation must necessarily determine a winner (or a draw at the worst). For example, if two characters have an arm wrestling match or a running race against each other, it is only logical for the best one to win.

To resolve a Non Random Opposed Test, nothing could be simpler: **the character with the best Success Probability wins the confrontation.** The greater the difference between the two numbers, the easier and/or the faster the victory. The Success (or Failure) Margin of this kind of Test is quite simply the difference between the characters' Success Probabilities.

If the Success Probability scores are the same, the GM can declare it to be a tie if this is a logical possible outcome of the situation. If a winner is an absolute requirement, then the GM is free to decide randomly (in this case the winner's Success Margin is equal to 0, which corresponds to a "Just barely" level of success).

Note to the GM: if you are unsure about which type of Test to use (Random or Non Random), always go for the Random Test, as usual. Similarly, if one of the two characters decides to "Take a Risk," the Test becomes a Random one.

OPPOSED TESTS

In both types of Tests previously mentioned, the character faces the Difficulty of an action. Sometimes, however, he is confronted with another character in what we refer to as an Opposed Test. This kind of Test is commonly used during hand-to-hand combat, for example (see the **Combat** chapter, page 211).

RESOLVING AN OPPOSED TEST

After having calculated the Base Success Probability of each of the opponents, roll a D20 for each of them. As for a normal Test, a roll result equal to or lower than the Success Probability is a success, a result above that number is a failure. The rules of Critical Success and Critical Failure also apply, as before.

Next, work out the results of the opposition using the following rules:

- **If only one of the characters succeeds at the Test, he is the winner of the confrontation** (in the case of hand-to-hand combat, for example, he manages to hit his opponent).
- **If both characters succeed at their Test, the winner of the confrontation is the one who obtained the highest score on the die or the highest final total after applying any Critical Successes** (so you need to roll a score *lower than* your Success Probability, but *higher than* your opponent's score). The winner succeeds in performing his action (in the case of hand-to-hand combat, for example, he manages to hit his opponent as before, but the opponent obviously defended himself better, and this will probably reduce the winner's Success Margin).
- **If both characters succeed at their Tests and get the same score on the dice or the same final total after applying any Critical Successes, the result is considered to be a "tie."** They both succeed in performing their action, but neither of them manages to take the upper hand (in the case of hand-to-hand combat, for example, each adversary manages to hit the other simultaneously). ***Note:*** if you still need to define a winner between the two characters, or if the circumstances of the contest are such that an exact tie is unlikely (example: the characters are testing their running speed in a race that is timed to the tenth of a second, which in theory rules out any possibility of a tie), select a winner randomly by rolling a D20 for each (the highest score wins, roll again if necessary).
- **If both characters have failed their Test, it is also a "tie,"** as nobody managed to get the upper hand over the other. They both fail to complete their action (in the case of hand-to-hand combat, for example, neither of them managed to hit the other). ***Note:*** if the circumstances require that there logically be a winner (two characters are comparing their strength by competing in an arm wrestling match, their speed in a sprint race, or their brainpower in a game of chess, for example), ignore this result and do the Test again (or you could instead do a Non Random Opposed Test, see page 206).

SUCCESS OR FAILURE MARGINS

The way you calculate the Success or Failure Margin of an Opposed Test depends on the outcome of the confrontation:

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• **If only one of the two opponents succeeded in his Test**, the victor's Success Margin is the result of his roll of the die (taking into account a possible Critical Success).

• **If both characters succeeded in their Tests, but there is still a clear winner and a loser**, the Success Margin of the winner is the number of points he obtained over the loser's score (once again, taking into account either opponent's Critical Successes), while the loser's Success Margin is 0.

• **In the case of a tie**, both opponents' Success Margins are 0.

The failure Margin is calculated as usual (in other words, the number of points above the Success Probability).

DIFFICULTY MODIFIERS

The characters who battle it out during an Opposed Test can very well apply Difficulty Modifiers to their Success Probability (whether the Tests are Random or Non Random). Each of the characters can even have his own Difficulty Modifier, depending on his situation: one of the characters can be suffering from a wound that decreases his Success Probability, a fighter can be blinded by a light in his eyes, or have a better reach in the case of a knife fight, etc.

USING A SIMPLE ATTRIBUTE/SKILL TEST INSTEAD OF AN OPPOSED TEST

In some situations, the GM can decide to use a simple Skill Test or Attribute Test instead of an Opposed test. For example, consider a creature with the Camouflage/Concealment skill. Normally an Opposed test between the Observation skill of the characters and the Camouflage/Concealment skill of the creature is required for the former to detect the latter. However, to simplify things, the GM can decide to roll a Camouflage/Concealment Test for the creature before the encounter. The success/Failure margin of this Test will be the Difficulty modifier for the characters' Observation Test (a penalty if the test is successful or a bonus if the test is a failure).

Advanced rule: Extended Opposed Tests (see *CRB2* p192)

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SKILLS

Many interactions can occur between Skills. One of these-Limiting Skills-is used frequently"

LIMITING SKILLS

The Skills known as "Limiting Skills" cover specific areas, knowledge, or abilities **that are used jointly as a complement to another Skill, and *in the same action***. For example, a hand-to-hand fight while balancing on a beam calls for the *Hand-to-Hand Combat* Skill, but also the *Acrobatics/Balance* Skill. Similarly, performing a solemn speech in public requires the use of the *Eloquence* Skill, but also the *Native Language* Skill (or whatever other language-related Skill is required for the language in which the speech is to be made). Making a connection between two Skills that are used together helps make the game system more coherent, while pointing out the need to develop a character's Skills in a harmonious and balanced fashion.

Technically speaking, and as its name suggests, the level of this kind of Skill limits the level of the Skill with which it is associated. For example, a character with a level of 5 in his *Acrobatics/Balance* Skill who is also using his *Hand-to-hand Combat* Skill (at a level of 12) to fight while balancing on a beam (or otherwise using an acrobatic movement during combat) will perform his Test with a level of 5.

The skills that are most commonly used as Limiting Skills are identified by the sign "**.**" You will find examples in their descriptions that will help you to know how and when to use them (see the chapter **Skills** on page 182). Remember that, most of the time, the Limiting Skills can also be used on their own, as single Skills.

LUCK

Luck is an Attribute that can be used at the discretion of the Gamemaster to determine if an event affects the characters. As for the Players, they can also use Luck to turn a negative situation around to one that will help them.

TESTING A RANDOM EVENT

When the GM wants to know if an event will affect a character or not, she can ask the Player in question to do a **Luck Test** (or she can do the Test herself, if the result needs to remain a secret or if the Test affects one of the non-Player characters). The event in question might be something negative or something positive. Here are a few examples of events that require a Luck Test:

- An insane individual opens fire randomly on the patrons of a bar where the PCs are drinking. Will one of them get hit by a stray bullet?
- The PCs enter an opponent's lair. Their enemy has randomly scattered mines all over the place. Will a PC set off one of his traps?
- A surface commando group needs to perform an urgent mission above-ground. Are the climatic conditions on the surface favorable—just for once—or is there a monstrous radioactive storm about to hit the region?
- The PCs dock at a station on board a stolen vessel. Are the authorities going to be particularly wary?
- The PCs investigate a gang of traffickers in Equinox. They decide to capture one of the gang members to

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try and convince him to give them a specific piece of information. Does the one they captured know this information?

- The PCs are the members of a pirate crew that has decided to attack a random vessel. Will the captured cargo be interesting?

It is also possible to ask the whole of the group of characters to take a Test if the event is likely to affect everyone (this is the case in the last 4 examples). In this case, things turn in the group's favor if most of the group succeeds at the Test, but they get worse if the opposite happens (if the result is a draw, flip a coin for the result).

Players may request a Luck Test depending on their characters' situations. They can, for example, wonder if their characters, whose vessel is drifting after a serious engine failure, have a chance of coming across another ship in the area that could help them out. Or maybe, the Player of a character who has been locked in the back of a warehouse with his hands tied by a synthetic rope could announce that his character will seek a tool or even a simple piece of metal that would be sharp enough to cut him free from his bonds. Faced with this type of request, the GM can very well solve the problem with a Luck Test, on the condition that the request is reasonable, realistic, and coherent within the environment.

In any case, the Test is a normal Random Test: **the Player must roll a D20 and obtain a result lower than or equal to his character's Luck level.** If the Test is a success, the events become favorable to the character or group of characters.

DEFYING DESTINY...

Deciding to take a Luck Test obviously means taking a risk of failing. Instead of that, the Players can choose to directly use Luck to influence events and force things to turn in favor of their characters. To do that, instead of rolling the dice, the Players voluntarily spend their Luck Points, therefore decreasing their characters' level of Luck... **Spending 1 Luck Point allows a Player to buy one of the following positive events:**

- **Boost:** before taking a Skill or Attribute Test, the Player can spend 1 Luck Point to gain an exceptional bonus of +5. There is, however, a consequence for this action: whatever the result of the roll, the Test's Success Margin is automatically 0 (if the bonus brings the character's Success Probability to 20 or above, you don't need to roll the D20). Any Critical Success should also be ignored. The "Boost" is to be used primarily for Random Tests, as chance has no part in Non-Random Tests, though a magnanimous GM could on occasion authorize a Player to spend a Luck Point to increase the Success Probability of a Non-Random Test by 2 points. Of course, this does not apply to Luck Tests, as spending one Luck Point is all that is required to obtain a "Favorable Event" (see below).
- **Favorable Event:** the Player forces events to turn in favor of his character. This could be the consequence of a successful Luck Test (in this case, the Player just spends 1 Luck Point up front instead of taking the Test), but it could also be the Player's suggestion, if he wishes to see his character benefit from a specific opportunity. To return to the previously mentioned examples, this could be obtaining the help of a passing vessel, being able to get rid of his bonds thanks to a sharp tool, or even to get unexpected help during a combat, finding an emergency exit that gets him out of a trap, being able to get out of an identity check thanks to an emergency call to the security officers, etc. As you can see, the possibilities are many and,

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above all, left to the initiative of the Players who can then take the destiny of their characters into their own hands. As usual, the GM is free to refuse any of these requests, in the interest of the game and the scenario, while making sure that the Players' requests are realistic and coherent.

- **Clue:** in a similar vein, a Player getting nowhere during an investigation can invoke Luck to obtain a clue regarding the current scenario. The GM can then give the Players some direction, slip an extra clue into the scenario, or even suggest a lead that hasn't yet been followed or that the Players may have forgotten.

To recap, when a Player *voluntarily* chooses to use his character's Luck, he has to spend 1 Luck Point. When the GM asks that a Player perform a Luck Test, there is no loss of points. Of course, the more Luck Points the Players spend, the more difficult their Luck Tests become. Fortunately, there are ways to win back Luck Points (see below). **A character whose Luck level has decreased to 3 can no longer spend any more Luck Points.** He must wait until he has returned to a level equal to or higher than 4 to be able to spend his points again , though he can still perform Luck Tests.

Please note that for events to be favorable to a *group* of characters, *each Player* must spend a Luck Point. This is the case for many of the "Favorable Events" listed above, and for any potential extra "Clues" given by the GM. If a Player can no longer spend any Luck Points (because the level of his character has fallen to 3), someone else will have to spend one for him.

...AND SURVIVING ANOTHER DAY

The world of the *Polaris RPG* is dangerous, and the combats in it are rough and deadly. However, the Player characters are the heroes of the story and, although the realistic side of the system is important, it would be a shame that they end up dead during the first hour of the game. Luck allows you to tweak the deadliness of any injuries and therefore let the characters survive their confrontations more easily. In game terms, **as soon as the character suffers a Serious Wound or worse, spending 1 Luck Point allows him to decrease the Wound Level by one degree of seriousness;** a Critical Wound becomes a Serious Wound, or a Serious Wound becomes a Moderate Wound. **It is even possible to spend up to 2 Luck Points at once,** to reduce the Wound seriousness by two degrees (so, after a Mortal Wound, spending 2 Luck Points allows the character to only suffer a Serious Wound). It is always possible to spend Luck Points in the case of a "Sudden Death," to prevent a character from dying (in this case, he is left with just a Critical Wound).

Note: if the level of seriousness that the wound is decreased to cannot receive any further Wounds (if all the available boxes have been ticked), the Player must spend more Luck Points to decrease the Wound Level again . In this case, ignore the 2-point maximum, and you can make an exception and reduce Wounds to something less severe than a Serious Wound. If the Player can no longer spend any more Luck Points, or if all the blocks of the Wound counter are full, it is impossible to reduce the wound.

ILLNESSES, POISONS, DRUGS, RADIATION...

Luck also works very well for these sorts of problems that can, in the long run, turn out to be as deadly as a bullet through the heart. The system works along the same lines: 1 Luck Point allows the character to reduce the level of the Illness, Poison, Intoxication, or Radiation by 5 points. As usual, it is not possible to spend more than 2 Luck Points at once.

GETTING BACK LUCK POINTS

There are several ways to get back Luck Points:

BEING UNLUCKY

Each time a character triggers a Catastrophe (Failure Margin of 15 or more) during a Random Test, he wins back 1 Luck Point (unless his Luck level is already at 15 or more). Note that the Player can also choose not to win back the Luck Point and do his Test again.

GOOD IDEA/WELL PLAYED

If a Player makes a considerable contribution to the scenario or the game, either with a good idea or an original initiative, the GM can choose to award his character 1 extra Luck Point. Similarly, if a Player stands out by the way he plays his character during an important scene, truly improving the scene's atmosphere, his character deserves 1 extra Luck Point. The GM is the sole judge of the actions that can be rewarded in this way, and we strongly encourage you to find a balance that works with your own group of Players. Usually, each Player should only be able to obtain that kind of reward once or twice in the scenario (or per game session, if the rhythm of the sessions is fairly spaced out or if the scenario is particularly long).

COMPLETING THE SCENARIO OR THE STORY

At the end of each scenario, or of each important episode of a campaign, the GM can award one or several Luck Points to the Players, depending on how well they succeeded in resolving the scenario and how invested they were in the story . You should also take into account the personal storylines of the characters and the general situation in the group: allies and enemies, current affairs, researches, various quests, and so on. Here is the scale you can use:

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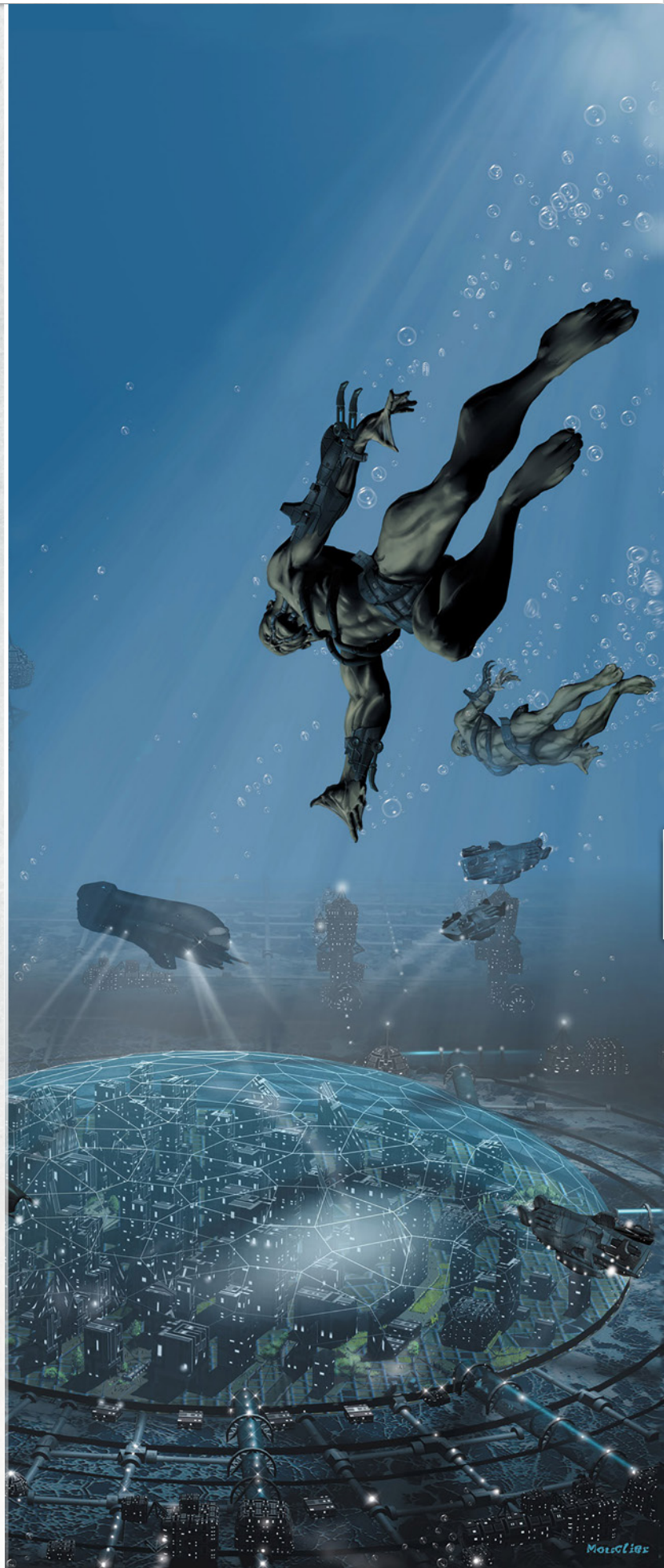
ACHIEVEMENT	LUCK EARNED
The characters haven't achieved any of their objectives (for example, they have completely missed the point of the scenario).	0 points
The characters have barely achieved their objectives, or they just barely made it (for example, they managed to resolve the scenario, but without really understanding the deeper details).	1 point
The characters have achieved their objectives (for example, they resolved the scenario, realizing the full extent of the intrigue: secrets, characters involved, consequences, etc.).	2 points
Bonus*: • **Excellent strategy/group cohesion** • **Perfect Success/Objectives Exceeded:** the secondary intrigues were resolved, extra bonuses were obtained (new allies, better bounty, etc.). • **Particularly difficult or dangerous scenario/intrigue.** • **Mission accomplished without any "collateral damage."** • **Key episode or climax of the campaign (high point, conclusion, ultimate confrontation with a powerful and recurrent enemy, etc.).** • **Discovery of one of the secrets of the world of the *Polaris RPG*...**	+1 point/bonus

**We recommend one or two bonus points maximum per scenario.*

LUCK OF THE NPCS

Non-Player characters also have a Luck level, which depends on their importance in the scenario or the campaign. Therefore, the GM can consider that the "simple extras" (the passersby, the henchmen...) have a Luck level of 10. They can take Luck Tests if necessary, but they can never spend any points. More important characters (such as a recurring enemy or his lieutenants) can have a Luck level of 15, or even more in the case of a *very* important character. They can also spend Luck Points just like the PCs. The GM is free to limit these expenditures to simple Wound Level reductions or leave them open to using the other options that to which the PCs also have access.



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CHAPTER 3.2

COMBAT

"Combat is an art form... Being big and strong is not enough—you also need to be fast and accurate. You have to know how to keep your calm and keep a clear mind, even when you're bleeding all over the place. You have to master the rhythm of the confrontation, the movements, and the distances. You have to be able to read the tactics of your opponent, find out what his weaknesses are, and how to work around his strengths. But, obviously, a 30-centimeter-long blade made of tempered steel or a gun filled to the muzzle with perforating ammo are still gonna give you a pretty strong advantage."

— Baral Faadhi, combat instructor

In the world of the *Polaris RPG*, combat is inevitable. There are too many people and creatures out there with bad intentions for the Player Characters to be able to stay out of harm's way. The rules presented in this chapter put the emphasis on tactics, and take into account a fair number of special cases, but, as usual, you should never hesitate to ignore a part of the system if it allows you to go straight to the point, gives the game a better sense of rhythm, and forces the Players to make critical decisions in stressful and hurried situations. After all, the combats in the *Polaris RPG* should be furious, rapid, violent, and deadly confrontations..

STRUCTURE OF A COMBAT

COMBAT ROUNDS

From the moment a character (or a creature) decides to undertake a violent action towards another, the narrative timescale suddenly slows down. The description of the combatants' actions becomes more precise and more detailed. Once that happens, the length of a combat is made up of one or several time segments called "Combat Rounds." Combat Rounds are artificial structures that allow you to better manage the way events play out (attacks, movements, etc.), and each one has a duration of roughly five or six seconds. Of course, when a combat comes to an end (when you run out of adversaries or once the threat has passed), the Combat Round time structure is no longer required.

INITIATIVE

Initiative allows you to determine the order in which the combatants will act. The Base Initiative depends on each character's Reaction Level (see **Initiative**, page 218).

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ACTION PHASES

Each Combat Round is divided into "Action Phases." **The total number of Action Phases in a Combat Round is equal to the highest Initiative of the combatants involved.** Each character can act during the Action Phase that matches his Initiative. Once everyone has performed his or her Action, the Combat Round is over.

SUMMARY OF THE STRUCTURE OF A COMBAT ROUND

1. SURPRISE (IF APPLICABLE)

If one or more of the participants are at risk of being surprised by their opponents (ambush, sudden attack, etc.), they must perform a Reaction Test to see whether and how effectively they can act. Characters who fail their Test in the first Combat Round will have a normal Initiative again during the following Round. See the section about "Surprise."

2. BASE INITIATIVE

Each Player works out the Base Initiative of his character, which is usually equal to his Reaction Level, unless it's affected by a specific bonus or penalty.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTENT AND CHANGES TO INITIATIVE

In an increasing order of Initiative (starting with the slowest character), each Player, including the GM for her NPCs, quickly but precisely declares the intentions of their character (to move, attack, etc.). If a Player's declared choice of action requires a change in the Initiative of his character, this takes effect immediately. The new value of Initiative is called his "Temporary Initiative," to set it apart from the Base Initiative (the one the character had at the beginning of the Round).

- **Multiple Attacks:** a Player who wishes his character to accomplish more than one Attack during the Combat Round must announce it at this point. He places the additional markers required on his Initiative Scale. See **Performing Multiple Attacks per Round** on page 218.
- **Matched Initiatives:** if several characters can act during the same Action Phase, and the actions are not considered to take place simultaneously, the Declarations of Intent must be made in an increasing order of Initiatives (the slowest declare their Action first, allowing those who are faster to react in response). See **Matched Initiatives** on page 213.
- **Delaying an Action:** a Player can decide to delay his character's Action. The character will act later in the Combat Round, during any of the remaining Action Phases. See **Delaying an Action** on page 213.
- **Preparation:** some Actions require a Preparation phase, in other words a gesture or a movement that will delay the Action itself (for example drawing a weapon or taking aim). See **Preparations** on page 216.
- **Modifications to Initiative:** certain events can change a character's Initiative. The new Initiative is called his "Temporary Initiative" (in contrast to the Base Initiative, the one in place at the beginning of the Round).

Optional: **Hurrying an Action:** a Player can choose to hurry his character's Action. The character will gain a bonus of +3 to his Initiative, but his Action will be given a penalty because of his haste. See **Hurrying an Action** *CRB2* page 194.

Optional: **Choosing a Combat Mode (melee combat only)**: at this point the Player can choose (or change) his character's Combat Mode. See the optional **Combat Modes** rules in *CRB2* on page 195.

4. RESOLVING THE ACTIONS

The declared Actions are then resolved in decreasing order of Initiative (the fastest goes first), during their respective Action Phases. Therefore, the character with the highest Initiative can act during the first Action Phase. The Players then perform the required Tests in turn (the Attack Tests, for example), then the GM announces the Action and its result. The higher the Success (or the Failure) Margin, the more spectacular the description of the action should be. (With the approval of the GM, an experienced Player can describe his character's Action himself!) The effects of the Action (the inflicted wounds, for example, and all the problems they may cause!) are applied immediately.

5. FATIGUE (IF NECESSARY; ADVANCED RULES ONLY)

If the GM is using the advanced rules for Fatigue (*CRB2* page 203), all the characters taking part in the combat perform an Endurance Test.

6. END OF THE ROUND OR END OF THE COMBAT.

Once all the characters have performed their Action(s), you begin again at **step 2** (Initiative) or end the combat if necessary.

In the following sections, you will find detailed descriptions of each of the elements of a Combat Round as well as relevant examples.

INITIATIVE

BASE INITIATIVE

As far as the game goes, the Base Initiative of a character is equal to his Reaction Level. However, all sorts of different elements can affect this Base Initiative, especially any penalties caused by bad health (Wounds, Fatigue, Illnesses); these modifiers affect a character's Reaction Level, and therefore his Base Initiative. See the chapter **States of Health**, page 232.

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INITIATIVE SCALE

To help the Players manage their Initiative, the Character Sheet includes an Initiative Scale where all the Initiatives are recorded. All you need to do is position a marker (token, piece of paper, etc.) on the square that corresponds to your character's Base Initiative and then move it if it is modified. As for the GM, she has a Combat Sheet on which she can also track the Initiative of her NPCs and other important creatures (see **Creature Sheets** and **NPC Sheets**, in the **Appendices** of *CRB2*).

DECLARATION OF INTENT AND MODIFICATIONS TO INITIATIVE

The Declaration of Intent is linked to Initiative: as soon as all the participants have worked out their characters' Base Initiatives, the Gamemaster should ask each of the Players what their characters intend to do in increasing order of Initiative. She will speak for the NPCs herself. Therefore, the Players who have the fastest characters will be aware of the intentions of the other characters and react depending on their intended Actions. On the other hand, the Players of the slowest characters have to declare their intentions without having a good overview of the rest of the combat. To simulate the stressful atmosphere of a real combat, and to keep up a good rhythm of play, the GM is highly encouraged to make her Players express quickly, and more importantly clearly, the intended Actions of their characters. If a Player hesitates, the GM can even make him lose 2 or 3 Initiative points! (This should, however, only be applied to experienced Players).

Some declarations can modify the character's Initiative:

- For example, if the Player chooses to make his character act faster than originally planned, it is a **Hurried Action**. The character will obtain a bonus for his Initiative, but the haste will cause him to have a penalty during the resolution of his Action. See **Hurrying an Action (Optional)** in *CRB2* page 194.
- Similarly, some actions require a form of **Preparation** before they can be carried out. Preparations are small actions that cause the character to take more time before he can perform the main Action; for example, drawing a weapon, taking aim, getting up after falling down, etc. See **Preparations** on page 216.

If the Player's Declaration requires a modification of his character's Initiative, this is applied immediately; the marker needs to be moved along the Initiative Scale at this time. During the resolution of the Actions, the character may gain or lose points when his Action Phase comes around. A fairly disciplined and precise Player can even announce a Preparation, and then let the next Player proceed if he loses the Initiative.

MATCHED INITIATIVES

When two characters are able to act during the same Action Phase, the priority goes to the character who has the highest Reaction Level (taking into account any applicable penalties such as Wounds, etc.). **The faster character's Action has to be fully resolved before the other combatant's Action begins.** In the case where the Reaction Levels are equal, you should consider that the two Actions take place simultaneously (if both of them are Attacks, the two characters can hurt each other at the same time!). If required, the Declarations of Intent can be made in secret, written down on a piece of paper.

TIME REALLY ISN'T ALL THAT IMPORTANT

In reality, time becomes quite elastic during a combat. For example, when two adversaries face each other, both armed with a gun and about to shoot at point-blank range, it is probable that everything will be over in less than two seconds. On the other hand, during a hand-to-hand combat, while the two opponents are moving around each other, each one looking for a weak spot in the other's defenses, 20 seconds can go by before one or the other makes his first move. Defining a Combat Round as a five- or six-second period is only useful when the passing of time itself is crucial, and when the Players want to have a more precise representation of the amount of time taken: if there is a countdown, a limited amount of time to perform an action, a character who has to hold his breath, etc.

SURPRISE

When a character (or a creature) is attacked suddenly, there is a risk of being surprised and being unable to put up an effective defense. An ambush, a trap, an assassination attempt (or a kidnapping attempt), a surprise attack (or an attack from behind), a live grenade that rolls along the ground into the middle of the group, a silent predator in the ocean depths that has decided to add some variety to its diet, and many other possible events are all situations that can put a character in instant danger, momentarily paralyzed by fear or surprise.

REACTION TEST

In terms of game play, all of the characters who are at risk of being surprised (*in theory*, all the characters who weren't aware that the attack was coming) must take a (Random) Reaction Test (with an average Difficulty, but all sorts of elements can affect that, as detailed below). The Success or Failure of the Test has a direct effect on the character's Initiative during the first Combat Round:

- **If he succeeds, the character will have an Initiative equal to his *Success Margin**.**
- **If he fails, the character is Surprised and cannot act during this Combat Round.** At the beginning of the following Combat Round, the character gets his usual Initiative back.

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** This does indeed refer to the Success* Margin *(which is the score of the roll) and not the Success Modifier.*

The Gamemaster can apply all of the modifiers (bonuses or penalties) that she deems necessary to the characters' Reaction Levels, depending on the situation. For example, if they can see their opponents rushing toward them, by running over a significant distance, a bonus should apply (the characters have, in this case, a little more time to react). On the other hand, if they are the victims of a particularly fast or surprising attack, then they could receive a penalty. Of course, any penalties due to Fatigue (*CRB2* page 203) or Wounds should also be applied.

Last, but not least, please note that there are times when the Reaction Test should be done for both of the combatants (or groups of combatants), especially in the case where the encounter is unexpected by both parties. If both sides fail the Test, then the affected characters (or groups) are stunned for a while (during the first Combat Round) before they can act again, without having to do the Reaction Test again (during the second Combat Round, with a regular Initiative).

Example 1: *a character in his diving armor is silently approaching the entrance to an underwater cave. However, the cave is none other than the lair of a predator of the seas. The character and the creature, who are both at risk of being surprised, should take a Reaction Test.*

CATCH SOMEONE BY SURPRISE

Example 2: *as he's walking down a deserted corridor in the city of Equinox, a young dealer comes face to face with a Watcher, who just so happens to be one of his worst enemies. Both characters have to pass their Reaction Test to be able to act effectively in the first Combat Round.*

DUEL OF REACTION

In some cases it is easier and more appropriate to make an opposed test using the Reaction secondary attribute of the characters. For example, this applies when two characters draw their weapons at the same time in a duel. The character who obtains the higher success margin acts before his adversary.

SURPRISE ATTACKS AND AMBUSHES

Attacking an opponent by surprise is a good way to take the upper hand. If the attacker is in a position to attack his opponent without exposing himself (attacking from behind, for example), he is immediately given a free Attack: therefore, he doesn't have to take his Initiative into account and, of course, gets to Attack first, applying all the relevant bonuses (aim, point-blank attack, charge, etc.). He still needs to succeed at a Skill Test (in the case of melee combat, the Surprised character is considered to be defenseless. See **Melee Combat** on page 221). After this free attack, the character who is being attacked can perform a Reaction Test following the usual rules. If he has been unlucky, he may suffer a penalty from a recently received Wound.

Example 1: *in a wide street in a large underwater city, with a group of his friends, a diplomat from the Coral Republic is the victim of a sniper shot, taken from 100 meters away by a well-camouflaged shooter (so virtually impossible to detect). Because of his position, the shooter has been awarded a free Attack. All the members of the targeted group now have to take a Reaction Test. The diplomat will, however, suffer a penalty for his Wound. His friends will not have any particular penalties.*

On the other hand, if the attacker has to expose himself when he attacks (by jumping out of his hiding place into his victim's line of sight, for example), he is not awarded a free Attack, but he does get a +5 bonus to his Initiative during the first Combat Round.

Example 2: *a security agent in a small station is tasked with apprehending a thief who has been active for far too long. He waits for the culprit to appear, hiding in the shadows. When the thief comes into range, the security agent jumps out at him to try and immobilize him, without trying to be particularly discreet. Having caught the movement in the corner of his*

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eye, the thief therefore knows someone is jumping out at him; he performs a regular Reaction Test. As for the security agent, he gets a +5 bonus applied to his Initiative.

Note that a surprise attack or an ambush usually calls for Skills in discretion, such as *Camouflage/Concealment*, *Stealth/Silent movement,* or *Discretion/Shadowing*. These skills will then be used in an Opposed Test against the opponent's *Observation* Skill.

DETECTING DANGER

At any point, a Player can ask that his character look around at his environment and analyze it in search of possible dangers. Various Skills can be used for this, depending on the situation (this is not an exhaustive list!):

- **An *Observation* Test**, with any required Modifiers (due to the Advantage Improved Senses or the Disadvantage Diminished Senses, for example) and any appropriate Limiting Skills (*Knowledge of an environment*, for example), can allow the character to detect any anomalies in his environment. These anomalies can be direct clues (for example, catching a glimpse of people hiding, or obviously up to something dodgy), or indirect clues that signal a *potential* source of danger (for example, an underwater crevice that could be a hiding place for a marine predator, or a school of fish that change direction suddenly as if to avoid a threat, etc.).
- **A *Security systems* Test** can allow him to detect cameras or various other alarm systems.
- **A *Traps* Test** can allow the character to detect traps (for example, a tripwire near the ground that is connected to a mine) or to identify objects that have been booby-trapped (a door, a crate, etc.).
- **An *Empathic analysis* Test** can allow him to know if the behavior of a character or group of characters is suspicious (the inspected character can then be given a Willpower Test to check if he can keep his calm without showing any signs of stress. In this case, his Success or Failure Margin acts as a bonus or a penalty when taking the *Psychological awareness* Test).
- **A *Tactics* Test**, during a confrontation or the exploration of a dangerous zone can give the character an overview of the area and insight into what could potentially be hiding places for opponents or snipers, or the area's weak spots (the ones that could be attacked first, in the case of an assault).
- **A *Discretion/Shadowing* Test** can allow him to put in place counter-surveillance techniques (taking a close look at the crowds, doubling back on his steps, going round in a circle...), to detect an effective attempt to follow him (for example, by spies or security agents who work in teams and take it in turns to avoid being detected).
- Etc.

A Failure of these Tests always means that the character hasn't detected anything (which doesn't mean there is nothing there; the character can still be On His Guard or be On the Alert, see below). If he succeeds at the Test, the character detects his opponents and will therefore not be Surprised. He will act normally during the first Combat Round, without having to take a Reaction Test.

Example: *in the middle of a negotiation with a group of smugglers, a fence from Equinox realizes (successful Empathic analysis Test) that one of them is particularly nervous, constantly hopping from one foot to the other, and sweating profusely. The fence is expecting the worst, and discreetly orders the nearest bodyguard to be ready. A few seconds later, the suspicious smuggler suddenly pulls out a weapon: he was an infiltrated security agent! All the characters present will need to take a Reaction Test, except for the agent with the gun, the fence, and the bodyguard who was warned, who will act normally.*

ANTICIPATING DANGER

Anticipating danger is a way to avoid being caught completely unawares in the case of a sudden attack. A character has the choice of two attitudes for this:

- **Be On His Guard:** being wary of everything and attentive to every single detail allows a character to act more rapidly if things go south, as long as he is focused and in control of his actions. A wary character who is On His Guard (the Player needs to tell the GM about this status, and remind her, if necessary) has to take a Willpower Test before he takes his Reaction Test. If he succeeds at the Willpower Test, the Success Modifier acts as a bonus for the following Reaction Test. If he fails the Willpower Test, he performs the Reaction Test as usual.
- **Be On the Alert:** this is the ultimate level of wariness. A character who is On the Alert is ready, weapon in hand, to attack any enemy who comes into range (or to respond to any threatening gesture from an enemy at which he is aiming). In terms of game play, he will not be Surprised in the case of an attack coming from the area that he is watching, and he will have a +5 bonus on his Initiative for the first Combat Round. However, there are drawbacks to this state, as maintaining the required level of concentration is pretty stressful. First of all, a character who is On the Alert can't do anything other than observe (if he attempts an Action, he will lose concentration and will therefore lose the benefits of the On the Alert status), and his movement is limited*. Furthermore, if he is the victim of an attack that he didn't see coming (from a stealthy adversary coming up behind his back, for example), his Reaction Test (Surprise) is given a penalty of -3 because of his extreme concentration. You should also note that a character On the Alert is only able to actively watch a limited specific area at a time, as the stress will

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tend to reduce his range of vision (the GM can give him penalties in the case of a Perception Test applied to an area that is not currently being watched). Finally, again because of the stress, if the character does detect even the slightest movement in the area he is watching, he will have to pass a Willpower Test. If he succeeds, he manages to keep his calm. If he fails, he automatically attacks the person or the creature that was detected, whether it's an enemy or an ally. If he rolls a Catastrophe, he could even completely go into a panic (and empty his magazine, for example). Note that a simple failed *Observation* Test, especially in the dark, can lead a character to think that "something just moved."

He can only move at a Slow Speed* (see **Movements and Gestures on page 219).

ACTING DURING COMBAT: THE ACTIONS

TYPES OF ACTIONS

During a Combat Round, each character is given the opportunity to perform one of the following Actions:

- **A Movement,** to move around in the area of the combat. See the section on **Movements and Gestures** on page 219.
- **A Combat Action,** often an Attack in Melee Combat or with a Ranged-Combat weapon. See the sections about **Melee Combat**, **Martial Arts,** and **Ranged Combat** on pages 221, 223, and 226.
- **Any other Simple Action** that can reasonably be performed in less than five or six seconds. See the section on **Simple Actions** on page 217.

FREE ACTIONS

"Free Actions" are very fast actions that do not slow down the character at all: saying a word (or screaming), dropping an object or a weapon on the floor, etc. Anything that can be accomplished by a single and simple gesture, or anything that can be said in a single word, can be considered to be a Free Action. As these actions are almost instantaneous, **assume that a character can always perform a Free Action, before, during, or after a normal Action.**

PREPARATIONS

The order in which the combatants can act, depending on their Initiatives, is an important factor, as it gives the faster characters the ability to act before others. However, in some situations, a character will not be able to act directly when his turn comes because he must carry out additional gestures or movements required for an Action to be performed. For example, it is necessary to draw a weapon before you can use it, or you may wish to take a little extra time to aim if you want to be sure to hit your target. **These gestures, which will delay the Action itself, are called "Preparations."** In terms of game play, Preparations change the Initiative of the character by reducing it: the planned Action will take place later during the Combat Round. Therefore, the character can lose the benefit of the Initiative to another combatant. In the following sections are examples that can be useful to manage any Actions that require Preparation, as well as the penalties that affect the Initiative.

Note: if a Preparation causes a character's Initiative to drop to 0 or below, the Action that should have been carried out during the current Combat Round is put off until the next Round. In the next Round, the character acts first and his Action has the benefits of Preparation.

To summarize, as soon as a character can act during the Combat Round (in other words during the Action Phase that matches his Base Initiative), he can perform an Action, which can in some cases be delayed by one or several Preparations. He is also allowed to perform a Free Action. During combat, the GM's task is to translate the Players' Declarations of Intent into Actions, Preparations, and Free Actions. In the following sections are examples of the most common Actions and Preparations used during combat (with the correct Initiative Modifiers, in the case of Preparations).

Example: *a merchant in debt, fearing for his security, has hired two bodyguards to protect him. The group is currently walking to a meeting in a bar, organized by one of the people to which the merchant owes money. In a walkway packed with people, one of the bodyguards suddenly notices some suspicious people heading toward them quickly; they are armed and cutting through the crowds. The meeting was a trap! As he is pretty quick, the bodyguard has an Initiative of 15. Furthermore, as he had spotted his adversaries in time, he is not going to be Surprised. He will be able to act during Phase 15, right at the beginning of the Combat Round. His first action is a Free Action that he can perform during Phase 15: he cries out to alert the second bodyguard and the merchant who haven't noticed a thing. His second action is a Preparation: he needs to draw his weapon, and this will cost him 5 Initiative points (the Player moves the marker on the Initiative Scale on his Character Sheet). He will only be able to use his weapon during Phase 10, as having to draw his weapon slowed him down.*

Here are a few examples of common Preparations, with the matching Initiative penalties:

- **Draw a weapon:** Initiative -5, or -3 if the character had his hand on the weapon, ready to draw.
- **Pick up an object:** Initiative -3 if the object is within reach, -5 to -10 if it is a few steps away.

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- **Move in close to be able to grab your opponent:** Initiative -3 (see **Wrestling** in **Martial Arts** on page 225).
- **Say a short sentence, give brief orders:** Initiative -3.
- **Observe the combat:** assume that each combatant is only aware of his closest opponent or opponents, the ones in his immediate range of sight. For every 5 Initiative points he chooses to sacrifice, the character can obtain one (and only one) piece of information about his environment; for example, the general layout of the place (nearest exits, an object or a piece of furniture that could provide cover, etc.), the precise number of visible opponents, their gear, their tactics (if they have any), their possible backup, etc.
- **Attempt to locate an object, a weapon, a person, a place, etc.:** for every 5 Initiative points he chooses to sacrifice, the character is allowed to undertake an *Observation* Test to try and find what he's looking for.
- **Use a simple mechanism:** Initiative -3 to -5 (for example, flipping a switch, opening a door).
- **Change the rate of fire of a firearm:** Initiative -3.
- **Shoot from cover:** a character who is in cover is protected by an obstacle of some kind or another (his opponents will have penalties if they Attack him). On the other hand, it doesn't really make it easy for him to shoot either. To aim, he gets a penalty of Initiative from -3 to -5 depending on his position.

COMMON SIMPLE ACTIONS

As an example, here are a few Simple Actions that are commonly used in combat. Unless the Gamemaster decides otherwise, any of these Actions can be performed during a Combat Round:

- **Reload a weapon:** some weapons may even require several Rounds to be reloaded (that makes them Complex Actions, see below).
- **Take an object out of a bag.**
- **Prepare and throw a grenade.**
- **Watch the combat carefully in order to work out a strategy.**
- **Give complete and precise orders.**

EACH OF THESE ACTIONS TAKES PLACE AT THE SAME TIME

Don't forget that the characters are not frozen in time. The one who has the Initiative acts faster than the others, but they do not stay frozen while he is carrying out his Action. A character who begins a Movement is not going to instantly move 10 meters before anyone else can intervene. No, he begins his Action before the others (that's a fact), but he will then need a certain amount of time before he completes it. In some cases, other characters will be able to intercept his Action, even if they are acting later on in the Combat Round.

COMPLEX ACTIONS

Actions that are carried out in combat are rapid movements or gestures: attack, shoot, move to a spot a few meters away, and so on. They can all be performed in a few seconds. The Combat Rounds themselves only last a handful of seconds. All confrontations are therefore managed over very short units of time and, in most cases, they are over very quickly. Nobody lives forever. In the particular context of a combat, what should you do with a character who decides to launch himself into a long or complex Action, one that is impossible to complete in five seconds? For example, tending to one of the wounded, hacking into a computer, neutralizing a security system, or repairing a vehicle?

In these instances, the Gamemaster must make up her own mind about the time that will be needed to complete the Action, relying on her common sense. If the action in question can be carried out in "a few Combat Rounds," then its resolution can very well be integrated into the process of the combat. Don't pay any attention to the character's Initiative (unless, for one reason or another, he needs to perform a regular Combat Action); he will spend several Combat Rounds performing his long Action and won't be able to do anything else. He can, of course, cut off that Action in order to take part in the combat. On the other hand, if the Action is really going to take a long time—several minutes, or even tens of minutes—the answer is quite simple: *don't take it into account.* Resolve the combat first, and then treat the rest afterwards.

COMBINING SEVERAL ACTIONS

It is often possible to combine two Actions, which will then be carried out in the same moment; for example, moving toward an opponent while shooting at him with a firearm. **This is allowed as long as the whole of the combined Action remains realistic** (therefore, the combination of more than two Actions is highly improbable). As usual, the GM is the judge of what is possible, and she can apply a penalty to the required Tests, the Difficulty of which depends on the situation and the combined Actions (or she can even order an Attribute Test for an action that wouldn't usually require a Test). See also **Penalties Due to Movements**.

Example: *an unarmed character wants to drop to the ground and do a fancy roll to move behind a bulletproof wall, out of the range of the enemy's shots. On his way, he wants to try and grab a pistol that is lying on the ground, the weapon of an ally who was shot not long before. These are considered two combined Actions. The first one (the drop and roll) requires an Acrobatics/Balance Test. The second one (picking up an object off the ground) would usually not require a Test. The GM decides that the Action is not exactly an easy one. In spite of that, she decides not to apply a penalty for the drop and roll. The Player rolls the dice and succeeds at his*

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Acrobatics/Balance Test. However, the GM then asks him to take a Coordination Test to pick up the weapon on the ground. This time, the Player fails the Test: the character performs a stunning drop and roll, but he didn't manage to pick up the weapon. Oh well, at least he's safe behind the bulletproof wall.

DELAYING AN ACTION

A Player can decide to Delay his character's Action. The character won't act during the Action Phase that matches his Initiative, but will do so later in the Round. This can be very useful, to see how things play out during a Combat Round, to wait for a specific event, or just to find out more about the intentions of another combatant, so that the character can react accordingly. Likewise, aiming a firearm at an opponent can be considered a Delayed Action. **The character can then act during any of the remaining Action Phases.**

If he decides to act during the same Action Phase as another character who is acting in the natural order, the delaying character's Action is considered to have priority and should be resolved first. On the other hand, if two Players who had Delayed their Actions decide to act during the same Action Phase, they come under the usual rule for Matched Initiative.

A character can also choose to Delay his Action from one Round to another. In this case, he can act in the first Action Phase of the following Combat Round, regardless of his Initiative.

PERFORMING MULTIPLE ATTACKS PER ROUND

A Player who wants his character to carry out more than one Attack per Combat Round must declare that during the Declarations of Intent. A character can carry out up to **three Attacks per Combat Round** (that is the highest number allowed). **He does, however, receive a negative Difficulty Modifier for all of the Attacks during the Round:** -5 if he wants to perform 2 Attacks, or -7 for 3 Attacks.

In the case of Multiple Attacks, the first Attack is carried out as usual during the Action Phase that matches the character's Base Initiative. Then, the other Attacks take place at regular intervals, every 5 Initiative points. A character who chooses to carry out more than one Attack will therefore act during the following Action Phases:

- **First Action:** Initiative
- **Second Action:** Initiative -5
- **Third Action:** Initiative -10

The Player can mark these actions on the Initiative Scale on his character sheet, by adding a marker for each of the relevant Action Phases. He must, of course, have a high enough Initiative to be able to carry out the additional Actions, which can only be carried out at intervals of 5 Initiative points for each.

Example: *a Player decides that his character (Initiative: 13) will carry out three Attacks during the Round that is just beginning. The character can act at Phase 13, then at Phase 13 – 5 = 8, then finally at Phase 8 – 5 = 3. On the Initiative Scale on his character sheet, the Player positions markers for each of the following Action Phases: 13, 8, and 3.*

This interval of 5 points must always be applied. For example, if a character decides to delay one of his Attacks (or perform a Preparation) and move its Action to a later Phase, the following Attacks will also be pushed back by as many Phases as required in order to apply the mandatory interval. Similarly, a Hurried Action (Optional rule in *CRB2* page 194) has the exact opposite effect: all the following Attacks are also moved, but moved forward (don't forget that the penalty that is applied for a Hurried Attack will be cumulative with the penalty for the Multiple Attacks). **Any Attack that is pushed out past Phase 1 is removed.** The penalty for the Tests should then be adjusted depending on the number of Attacks performed during the Round.

Example (continued): *the character can carry out three Attacks, during Phases 13, 8, and 3. However, he decides to Delay his first Attack by 3 Phases, to take some time and observe the combat. This means that he can now act during Phase 13 – 3 = 10, and then again at Phase 8 – 3 = 5 (the Player shifts all his markers on the Initiative Scale). Unfortunately, he loses his third Attack that was shifted out past Phase 1 (the last Action Phase in the Combat Round).*

As you will see later on, some Attacks are *exclusive*, which means that they don't allow any other Attacks during the same Combat Round (a character who uses one will therefore be limited to a single Attack). This is the case, for example, for the Charge or Long Burst Shot Attacks.

ACTIONS AND COMBAT UNDERWATER

At depths under 200 meters below sea level, there isn't enough light to be able to see without special equipment. Without correct lighting devices, only Hybrids can still find their way around in the darkness of the sea depths, due to a sort of passive sense that enables them to feel movements and to perceive shapes. With a spotlight, the light levels improve, but they are still dark in some areas. A diver can't use his hearing or his sense of smell underwater (however, Hybrids and marine creatures can). Of course, a lowered security visor on a suit of diving armor also deprives the person of their sight.

During unarmed melee combat, only wrestling really has an effect: because of the water resistance, hitting the opponent has little effect—**damage is divided by two**—if the combatant isn't using a bladed weapon (some creatures can also count on their natural weapons). A character wearing mechanical armor doesn't have this limitation.

Finally, it is not possible to carry out several Attacks underwater in one Combat Round: the characters are limited to a single Attack. Hybrids are similarly restricted, so they can only perform a maximum of two Attacks per Round.

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ATTACKS BY CREATURES WITH SEVERAL LIMBS

Any creatures (or mutants) who have more than two arms are allowed one additional Melee Attack per Combat Round, for each additional pair of arms (therefore, with four arms, the creature or character can carry out two Attacks). Any monsters with several attack limbs are allowed a separate Attack for each of the attack limbs at its Initiative (a reaper spider, for example, can carry out separate Melee Attacks on two different opponents, with each of its two limbs). However, these creatures are limited to a single Attack when it comes to hand-to-hand wrestling.

Note: a creature (or a mutant) that has several limbs receives a bonus of +2 per extra limb during melee combat or when using wrestling techniques.

Creatures that have tentacles—an octopus for example—will also have the ability to carry out several independent and separate Attacks. Each one of these Attacks is considered as if carried out by a different adversary, even for melee combat or wrestling (this is often the case with attacks that involve the use of tentacles). Generally speaking, an octopus uses six tentacles to attack (the remaining two are used either to hang on to something or to stabilize the creature). This means that it could Attack six different opponents. If the creature Attacks the same opponent with several of its limbs, each Attack is carried out separately. The strength with which the monster can hold its prey and the effects of the wrestling Attack depend on the number of limbs that succeeded in their Attacks.

CATASTROPHES DURING COMBAT

Obtaining a Catastrophe during combat is never going to be good news. Here are a few examples of possible consequences, to add to the Failure of the attempted Action, just to spice things up a little (roll 1D10 and feel free to adapt these to the situation):

1. Clumsiness: *the character loses all his Actions for the following Round.*

2. Unusable weapon: *the weapon falls to the ground (bladed weapons), jams (firearms), or breaks (low-quality weapons, but also bow or crossbow strings). The character could also lose his shield.* ***Note:*** *repairing a jammed firearm is a Complex Action that requires three Combat Rounds, and a successful Test of the corresponding weaponry Skill.*

3. Wrong target: *the character hits a target other than the one at which he was aiming (the closest one to him, whether it's an enemy or an ally).*

4. Oops!: *the character hurts himself with his own weapon (bladed weapons).*

5. Sitting duck: *the character has exposed himself a little too much; all his opponents get a bonus of +5 if they try to hit him.*

6. Confusion: *the character receives a penalty of -5 for all of his Actions during the next two Combat Rounds.*

7. Ka-Boom!: *an overload or the explosion of a battery or some ammo (this can even damage the weapon at the same time).*

8. System Failure.

9. Ouch, my eye!: *the character is blinded for one Combat Round, for some reason or another (blood or sweat or even a bug gets in his eye or eyes, etc.).*

10. Off-balance: *the character stumbles or trips over an obstacle on the floor and falls over.*

TACTICAL COMBAT

We can never say this too many times: during a fight, the participants who have a satisfactory global view of the whole situation are very rare. So, it's helpful to have a capable "tactical coordinator" as part of the team, usually an officer (at least, in any hierarchical combat group: armies, mercenaries, police, or even pirates). Any group can discuss and follow a tactical plan to the letter. However, in the case of an unexpected situation or if things go wrong, it will probably be complete chaos, unless someone takes it upon himself to take the lead, to organize the group, and to improvise if something unexpected happens.

In any case, some form of tactical coordination is necessary for several individuals or groups to carry out coordinated Combat Actions; for example, launching a simultaneous Attack in two different places, setting up a crossfire, or setting up suppressive fire to cover another group that is moving toward the area of the conflict. As well as better overall organization, the combatants can also benefit from a better analysis of the situation, thanks to the presence of a tactical coordinator and his ability to centralize information (number and position of opponents, dangerous areas, etc.). A competent officer will also be able to rally the troops if they are thrown off course, by passing a *Command* Test.

The Skill to use is *Tactics* (*Commando Operations*, *Naval Combat*, or *Ground Combat*, depending on the kind of confrontation). A successful Test allows him to organize the combat groups in an efficient way (whether they are individuals, combat groups, or vessels). If he fails the Test, no decisions are made (and a Catastrophe would mean that a bad decision was implemented). The tactical coordinator must, however, spend one or more Combat Rounds observing the combat (depending on the GM's estimate and depending on the complexity of the situation). The transmission of orders can be done in an equivalent number of Combat Rounds.

Of course, he has to be able on the one hand to communicate with his team members (either directly or through communicators), and on the other hand have a good view of the battlefield. The GM can give the tactical coordinator a penalty if he is in a situation where he can't see everything. He will then have to rely on situation reports from his men. In some cases, the tactical coordinator can follow the action from a distance, such as via the use of video cameras or with spy drones.

MOVEMENTS & GESTURES

MOVING DURING COMBAT

A Movement Action can be used any time a character wishes to make a *significant* movement in the combat area: moving closer to or further away from someone or something, finding a better tactical position or a better

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shelter, etc. Many melee combat actions naturally involve some minute movements (an opponent who doesn't move is either dead or solid as a rock), but this only usually involves movements over very small distances that are negligible on the scale of the combat area. Therefore, although it is seldom necessary measure the movements of two opponents who are fighting in a ring or in a tiny room (the distances are too short), the Movement Actions become much more meaningful when the characters have to fight in a more open area: a large room in a bar, a hangar, the walkways of a station, underwater, etc.

MOVEMENT SPEEDS

Each time that he wants to move during combat, a character can choose between four different speeds:

Slow Speed: this is the the character's movement speed if he is hindered by difficult terrain (through rubble, on a slippery surface, in thick mud, through thick vegetation, with water up to his waist, etc.). The character can also choose to move cautiously because of dangerous terrain (risk of mines, traps, losing balance, sharp metal debris, etc.) The Slow Speed is also recommended for all characters who wish to move silently (no penalties on the *Stealth/Silent Movement* Test).

Moderate Speed: this is the usual speed of movement for a character during combat. Please note that a Moderate Speed can add a penalty for all the Tests for Skills that require a little precision and stability; for example *Stealth/Silent movement*, *Acrobatics/Balance*, shooting Tests, etc. (see **Penalties Due to Movements** below).

Fast Speed: this is the speed that allows a character to cover a longer distance while running. This speed further increases the penalties for any Actions that require precision or awareness. This is also the speed at which a character will move if trying to run while heavily encumbered (armor, bags, military-grade weapons such as an assault rifle, various pieces of equipment, etc.).

Maximum Speed: this is the character's movement speed if he is running as fast as possible on flat, open ground in a roughly straight line, and without any form of encumbrance or hindrance. This speed category is available to characters, but it is an incautious, even dangerous way to move during combat. Indeed, the character can't do anything else other than run, all the while being more exposed to the dangers of the combat and to accidents of all kinds. He can't make any sudden changes in direction either, and will probably need quite a distance to come to a stop, as well, unless he dives to the ground.

Note: the Slow and Moderate Speeds can also allow a character to move while crouching behind a form of cover (crates, tables, etc.) to be less exposed to enemy shots.

PENALTIES DUE TO MOVEMENTS (COMBINED ACTIONS)

A vast number of Actions can be combined with a Movement, as explained in the section **Combining Several Actions** *on page 213. The table below gives you the penalties to apply while the character is moving (these modifiers are given as an indication; feel free to ignore them and apply your own modifiers if you think the situation requires it). Simply work out the general nature of the attempted Action and apply the penalty that matches the character's speed:*

Type of Action	Speed			
	Slow	Moderate	Fast	Maximum
Precision	-3	-5	-7	Action impossible
Balance	+0	-5	-10	Action impossible
Stealth	+0	-5	-10	Action impossible
Awareness	+0	-3	-5	-7

MOVEMENTS IN ZERO GRAVITY

If at any point the characters need to carry out a Movement in zero gravity, consider that their base Movement Speed is Moderate (if they don't have any particular means of propulsion). Be careful, however—without any help, the characters need something to push off of to be able to rush forward and can absolutely not change direction during their Movement.

GROUND MOVEMENTS

The table that follows indicates the maximum ground movement distances (in meters). The Slow to Fast Speeds depend on the character's **Coordination** and the Maximum Speed depends on the level of the Skill *Athletics*:

COO/ *Athletics*	Speed			
	Slow	Moderate	Fast	Maximum
3–5	3	6	12	24
6–10	4	8	16	32
11–15	5	10	20	40
16–20	6	12	24	48
21–25	7	14	28	56
26 & over	Mod. Spd /2	+2 m every 5 levels	Mod. Spd x2	Mod. Spd x4

The values are mainly just an indication and are only really useful when you need to manage distances very precisely. The rest of the time, feel free to round them out to simplify the game. Some of these Movement distances may also seem rather short, but don't forget that they apply to movements made by characters with high adrenaline who are dodging, weaving, zigzagging through dangerous areas, and looking for the best areas of cover to try and avoid getting hit by a stray bullet.

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MOVEMENT DISTANCES UNDERWATER

COO/ *Athletics (or Hybrid)*	SPEED											
	Slow			Moderate			Fast			Maximum		
	Hum	TH	Hyb	Hum	TH	Hyb	Hum	TH	Hyb	Hum	TH	Hyb
3–5	0.5	2	3	1	4	6	2	8	12	3	16	24
6–10	1	3	4	2	6	8	4	12	16	6	24	32
11–15	1	4	5	3	8	10	6	16	20	9	32	40
16–20	2	5	6	4	10	12	8	20	24	12	40	48
21–25	3	6	7	5	12	14	10	24	28	15	48	56
26 & over	Moderate Speed /2			+2 m for every 5 Levels			Moderate Speed x2			Moderate Speed x4		

Hum.: Normal Humans; **TH:** Techno-Hybrids; **Hyb.:** Natural Hybrids and Geno-Hybrids.

MOVEMENTS UNDERWATER

The speed system also applies to Movements that take place underwater. Of course, Hybrids have a clear advantage when compared with regular humans (Techno-Hybrids are, however, only slightly less powerful than Natural Hybrids and Geno-Hybrids). As for Movements on solid ground, the Slow, Moderate, and Fast Speeds are defined by the character's Coordination Level, whereas the maximum speed depends on the Level of the *Athletics* Skill. Do note, however, that Natural and Géno Hybrids can replace their *Athletics* Skill with their *Hybrid* Skill as far as underwater Movements are concerned, which gives them a little additional advantage (see table above).

SHORT MOVEMENTS

Regardless of the speed at which they are carried out, Movements under 3 meters can be considered to be Preparations, especially if they are performed before an Action. **In this case they cost 3 Initiative Points.**

Example: *a character (Base Initiative: 14) wishes to engage another character in melee combat. To do so, he needs to move 3 meters to come closer to his opponent; the GM considers that for such a short distance, there is no point going through a whole Movement Action. This 3-meter Movement will therefore be considered as a Preparation for the following melee Attack, which costs the character 3 Initiative Points. The Attack will therefore take place during the Action Phase 14 – 3 = 11. Note that if the opponent has an Initiative higher than 11, he will be able to attack first; indeed, he will have had the time to prepare for combat while the other character was moving in.*

If you don't want to manage Movement quite so precisely, you can simply consider that Movements of 3 meters or less are negligible in the scale of the combat, and then simply assimilate them into Free Actions.

CRAWLING

Once he is lying on the floor, a character can crawl. If you need to know at what speed he can move, consider that he can move over a distance equivalent to that which he could cover at a Slow Speed if he is trying to move as quickly as possible, and only half that distance if he is moving carefully (to try and be stealthy, for example).

MELEE

The term "Melee" covers hand-to-hand combat, wrestling, and fighting with a knife (as well as anything else that can be employed as a weapon at close quarters).

ATTACKER AND DEFENDER

In the following rules, the character who initiates the attack is known as the "Attacker." His adversary is logically referred to as the "Defender." Note that a Defender can choose to delay his Actions (in that case, the Defender may have chosen to await the attack, having readied himself). Delayed actions in melee are often used as defensive tactics in the Defensive Combat Modes (see **Combat Modes**, in *CRB2* page 195).

COMBAT RANGE

A character is "engaged in melee" whenever he is within 3 meters of his adversary (more precisely, when both human-sized adversaries are located within a 3-meter radius of each other). If he is more than 3 meters away, he must move to within melee range first. Depending on the distance that needs to be covered, this can be a matter of either a simple "Short Move" (a Preparation that costs 3 Initiative points and involves a movement of 3 meters or less), or a full-blown Movement Action (which will take a full combat round). A Short Move can also be used to disengage or

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to keep out of range. Note that this only works if there is enough room for the character to move out of harm's way!

Note: certain weapons confer an attack bonus due to their size, see **Extended Reach**, page 222.

MELEE TESTS

An "attack" in melee is not limited to a single blow: it denotes a short assault composed of a series of blows, maneuvers, and feints aimed at finding an opening in the adversary's defenses. This is resolved through an **Opposed Test** made by each of the two combatants rolling against the Skill on which their chosen combat technique is based, which may be determined by the weapon they are using: *Heavy weapons, Armed combat,* and *Hand-to-hand combat*.

Here are the various possible combat results:

- **The Attacker succeeds at his Test, the Defender fails:** Attack succeeds. If the Attacker uses a *Martial arts* Skill (*Offense Technique* or *Wrestling*) he can employ a combat technique (see "Martial Arts" page 223). A successful attack normally results in a Damage roll (see **Damage**, page 228).
- **Attacker fails his Test, Defender succeeds:** Attack fails. If the Defender uses the *Martial arts* Skill (*Defense techniques* or *Wrestling*) he can execute a combat technique (see **Martial Arts**, page 223).
- **Both Attacker and Defender fail their Tests**: nothing happens.
- **Both Attacker and Defender succeed at their Tests**: usually the one who attains the highest Success Margin is the winner (see the possible outcomes set out above). In the event of a tie, nothing happens.

Note: in the event of simultaneous attacks (see **Matched Initiatives**, page 213), both combatants are treated as "Attackers." In that case, the two attacks are not resolved on the basis of opposed Tests, but by each opponent rolling separate attacks on the appropriate Skill. If both characters succeed in their attacks, each inflicts damage on the other.

The Gamemaster is free to apply any modifiers justified by the situation, such as one combatant having a tactical advantage over the other, for example:

- **Being attacked from the flank:** -3 (or from above/below, in underwater combats, for example).
- **Being attacked while down:** -5
- **Being attacked while in a vulnerable position**: -3 to -5 (not having enough room to move freely or while trying to use a large weapon in a confined space, for example).
- **Attacking from an advantageous position:** +3 (e.g. from a superior height, from a protected location, etc.).
- **Using the non-primary hand**: -5.
- **Fighting on unstable terrain or while off balance**: character actions are limited to what is allowed by his level in *Acrobatics/Balance*.
- **Fighting in poor light**: -3 to -5.
- Etc.

FIGHTING BLIND

If someone wants to fight in total darkness, or if his vision has been obscured somehow, the GM can require him to make an *Observation* Test (usually based on his hearing) at the beginning of each Combat Round. If he fails, he can't attack. If he succeeds, he may attempt an attack (but only one) but must carry out the Test with a -7 penalty. In any event, the character must be within combat range for this to work.

FIGHTING WITH TWO WEAPONS AT A TIME

A character may fight with two weapons, one in each hand, provided he is able to handle them (see the **Gear** chapter in *CRB2*, page 8). If attacking, he will receive a +3 bonus for his melee Tests (since he has more opportunities to attack). If using the *Martial arts (Offense techniques)* Skill, he gets to roll an extra attack during his Action Phase (see "Martial Arts," below). If defending using the *Martial arts (Defense techniques)* Skill, the character can also use the "Fighting with two weapons" technique to gain a +3 bonus on his Opposed Test. He does not receive any bonus unless he uses the *Martial arts* Skill.

ATTACKING SOMEONE WHO IS NOT DEFENDING

If a character can't see his assailant or is not aware he is being attacked, he cannot take any defensive measures. In that case, no Opposed Tests are made: all the Attacker needs is to make a successful Combat Test, with a +5 bonus.

FIGHTING MULTIPLE ADVERSARIES

Anyone confronting multiple adversaries has a penalty applied to all his Opposed Tests, both offensive and defensive. This penalty is based on the total number of adversaries facing him:

OPPONENTS	PENALTY
2	-5
3	-7
4	-10

Four is the maximum number of adversaries one can fight at once (beyond that the adversaries will get in each other's way).

EXTENDED REACH

Due to their size, certain weapons impart a Reach bonus to melee Opposed Tests (see the Equipment chapter in *CRB2*, page 8). In attack as well as defense, they enable the wielder to strike an adversary at a distance or prevent him from getting close. When both opponents are entitled to a Reach bonus, the lesser of the two bonuses is subtracted from the greater and the character wielding the longer weapon gets to add the difference to his Combat Test.

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The Reach bonus can, however, be a double-edged sword:

- **If the character with the reach bonus fails his Opposed Test,** his adversary can then exploit this to close the distance between them. The character's weapon will then become much more difficult to wield at close quarters.
- **In a confined space or in a situation where the wielder's movements are restricted,** the handling of certain long weapons (especially two-handed long weapons, such as combat poles) can be a problem. This is, however, subject to the GM's interpretation.

In such cases, **the Reach bonus converts to a penalty.**

MARTIAL ARTS AND SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

USING MARTIAL ARTS

The *Martial arts* Skills represent advanced combat techniques that confer significant combat advantages on those who master them.

In game terms, during each Combat Round, **a character who uses a *Martial arts* Skill may employ one (and only one) of the techniques described below.**

Some of these techniques can also be used by non-specialists without recourse to the *Martial arts* Skills. Anyone may attempt to put an arm lock on someone or break free of a hold, but without specific martial arts training these techniques are inherently difficult to use, and even more difficult to master. The rules specify the conditions required for the use of these combat techniques by the untrained (certain techniques simply cannot be used without specialized training).

OFFENSE TECHNIQUES

Anyone who opts to employ *Martial arts (Offense techniques)* must have the Initiative on his adversary and, if you are using the *optional rule* Combat Modes, must be fighting in Normal, Offense, or Charge Mode (*CRB2* page 195). For the Combat Round in progress, he can choose one of the following combat techniques:

Full Force Strike

A character trained in Offense techniques can strike effectively with every part of his body: hands, elbows, legs, knees, shins, head, etc. He gets a +3 bonus on Damage (***Optional:*** for Charges, this bonus is added to the initial Charge bonus of +3, for a total of +6, see Combat Modes in *CRB2* page 195).

Use by the untrained: *impossible*

Disabling Hit

The character strikes at a particularly sensitive vital spot (for example, the nose, temple, tip of the chin, joint of the jaw, throat, solar plexus, liver, genitals ... that's got to hurt, right?) He inflicts normal Damage, but also forces his adversary to carry

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out a Shock Resistance Test, rolling with a -5 penalty (no matter how serious the wound). If the wound alone would require a Shock Resistance Test, the penalties are stacked. See the section **Shock**, in the **States of Health** chapter on page 235.

Use by the untrained: *impossible*

Precise Blow

The character delivers a precise and controlled blow. All the targeting penalties described in the section "Hit Location," "Targeting a Specific Location" are reduced by 3 points.

Use by the untrained: *not applicable (the standard rules apply).*

Sequence of Blows

The character delivers a rapid succession of blows. As provided for by the rules for Multiple Attacks (see **Acting During Combat: the Actions, Performing Multiple Attacks per Round** on page 218), he can deliver up to three Attacks, but must apply the following penalties: first Attack at +0, second Attack at -3 (two Attacks); first Attack at -3, second Attack at -5, and third Attack at -7 (three Attacks).

Use by the untrained: *not applicable (the character must follow the standard rules).*

Wielding Two Weapons at Once

In addition to the normal +3 bonus on his Combat Tests (see Melee, Fighting with Two Weapons at a Time, page 222), a character may attempt to carry out an extra Attack free of charge: to pull this off he must succeed at another Combat Test with a penalty of -5 (both of these Tests are limited by *Martial arts*). His adversary defends normally against the second Attack.

Use by the untrained: *impossible*

Sweep

With one precise and rapid kick, the character sweeps his adversary's feet out from under him. The adversary must then carry out a Coordination Test. If successful, the adversary is slightly off-balance and loses (5 + Attack Success Modifier) Initiative points on his next Action (if his Initiative falls below zero, any remaining penalties are deducted from his Initiative for the following Combat Round). If he fails, his Failure Modifier is increased by the Attacker's Success Modifier. With a normal Failure, the adversary is seriously unbalanced: he incurs the same Initiative penalty described above and, additionally, his next Action must be carried out with a penalty of -5. In the event of a Catastrophe, he falls flat on the ground.

Use by the untrained: *the attacker must successfully carry out a Combat Test with a -5 penalty. If the adversary performs a successful Coordination Test, nothing happens. If he fails, the resulting penalty will be applied to his Initiative, but not to his Combat Test. In the event of a Catastrophe, the adversary falls flat.*

Defense Techniques

A character who decides to use *Martial arts (Defense techniques)* must fight in either Normal or Defense Mode or Retreat if you are using the ***optional rule*** **Combat Modes** (*CRB2* page 195). During that Combat Round, he may choose one of the following combat techniques:

En Garde

The character has elected to emphasize defense over all else and to leave as few points as possible open to attack. His adversary incurs a -3 penalty on any Opposed Tests.

Use by the untrained: *impossible*

Dodging (Retreats only)

This combat technique gives the character the +5 bonus normally associated with a Retreat Action, but without having to yield any ground.

Use by the untrained: *impossible*

Using Two Weapons at Once

The character uses his second weapon to deflect his adversary's attacks. This gives him a +3 bonus for his Opposed Test.

Use by the untrained: *impossible*

Defending against Multiple Adversaries

This technique makes a character more effective against multiple opponents. All the penalties for fighting multiple adversaries are reduced by 3 points (see **Melee, Fighting Multiple Adversaries** on page 222).

Use by the untrained: *impossible.*

Disengaging from and Breaking Free of Grapples

This technique allows a character to respond immediately when an adversary seizes him by the clothes, limbs or hair, or when being strangled or pinned down. If the adversary uses *Martial arts (Wrestling)* to either execute this hold, both characters must carry out Opposed Melee Tests, as usual. Otherwise, the attacked character may attempt a simple *Martial arts (Defense techniques)* Test. If successful, the character breaks free. If the adversary hasn't performed or has failed his Opposed Test, the character can proceed directly to performing a simple *Martial arts (Wrestling)* Test to try to execute an arm lock or throw on him (see below), or a simple Combat Test to carry out an Attack. *Note:* where a character is attacked by surprise, the rules for Surprise apply (see the **Surprise** paragraph, page 213).

Use by the untrained: *the only option for an untrained character is to attempt to win an Opposed Strength Test versus his adversary. If the adversary in the example above employs the* Martial arts

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(Wrestling) *Skill, the character will not be able to break free of his hold unless the adversary fails his Test.*

Defending Against an Armed Attacker

If the character is being threatened by a weapon, provided he is within striking range, he can attempt an Opposed *Martial arts (Defense techniques)* Test versus the attacker's Reaction Test. If successful, the character gets out of his adversary's range. If the adversary is armed with a bladed weapon, the situation reverts to a normal combat situation. If the adversary is equipped with a firearm, the character is completely at his adversary's mercy, unless cover is close at hand. On the other hand, if the adversary fails his Opposed Test, the character manages to wrestle his adversary's weapon away and turn the tables on him!

Use by the untrained: *don't even think about it!*

WRESTLING

The *Martial arts (Wrestling)* Skill covers all the traditional wrestling techniques: holds, pins, throws, etc. It's also the most effective way of fighting when on the ground, and the only way of fighting underwater, where regular blows are ineffective due to the resistance posed by the water. Any character opting to *Wrestle* must be in direct physical contact with his adversary; in other words, in a position to grab him. **To successfully grapple someone you must successfully carry out an Opposed Melee Test against them. A grapple counts as a Preparation and costs 3 Initiative points.** During the current Combat Round you must choose one of the following combat techniques:

Holding/Pinning

The character executes a lock—dislocating or twisting one of his adversary's joints—either upright, underwater, or on the ground. Usually this amounts to an arm lock directed at one of the joints in the arm (shoulder, elbow, wrist, or finger.), but all other joints are vulnerable to these kinds of annoyances (knee, ankle, even hips or neck joints). The Gamemaster is free to adjudicate the situation and impose whatever penalties she deems appropriate. To put someone in a lock, the character must successfully carry out an Opposed Melee Test against an adversary who *fails* his Test. In addition, if the character is weaker than his adversary, his Success Margin must be at least double the difference between their Force levels. Once a lock hold has been performed, the adversary yields due to the overwhelming pain and the character may maintain the hold for as long as is necessary. What's more, he can also take it up a notch and freely inflict Damage, ranging from moderate (minor sprain or dislocation) to serious (dislocated joints or fractures) to massive injuries (such as a complete dislocation or broken fingers). A neck lock can even result in the adversary's death. Once again, it is up to the Gamemaster to adjudicate the situation in whatever way makes the most sense to her.

Use by the untrained: *executing a lock without training is always possible, but difficult, because the character won't know the right locations to target. Any success will owe more to brute force than technique. He must perform a successful Melee Test with a penalty of -5 to -7 (depending on the difficulty of the lock) versus an adversary who fails his Test. During each following Combat Round, he must then perform a successful opposed Strength Test versus his adversary, or a* Martial arts (Defense techniques) *Skill Test to maintain the lock. He must carry out 3 successful Tests before he can inflict any real damage.*

Chokeholds

A chokehold is designed to suffocate an adversary by cutting off the flow of blood to his brain by the application of pressure to the neck, either with the hands, the lower arms (in the case of an attack from behind), or the thighs (most successful underwater). Chokeholds use the same rules as any other holds (see above). They inflict a different kind of damage, however. A chokehold maintained for 2 Combat Rounds will cause the victim to temporarily black out (these effects disappear within 1D6 minutes). A chokehold sustained for a number of Rounds equal to half the victim's Constitution Rating will kill him. ***Note:*** if the character is attacked by surprise, the rules for Surprise apply (see the **Surprise** section, page 213).

Use by the untrained: *see the rules for locks. Using a rope to strangle an adversary, or a successful attack by surprise, can allow the attacker to ignore any penalties.*

Throwing

A throw launches one's adversary roughly to the ground. Throws use the same rules as locks (see above). The effects are different, however: the character can choose to inflict a 1D6 + Success Modifier + his Melee Combat Damage Modifier on his adversary at a randomly determined hit Location as a result of the throw. The GM is free to reduce or increase this damage, as appropriate.

Reminder: any creature (or mutant) that has extra limbs gets a +2 bonus for each extra limb when in melee combat or while using wrestling techniques.

REGARDING WRESTLING UNDERWATER

Whenever characters are battling underwater, all the rules of wrestling (and of defenses against grapples) apply, except with respect to throws. All wrestling-related combat actions must be rolled with a penalty of -5, however, because fewer combat techniques are possible underwater due to the absence of any surface on which to base oneself—normally a critical factor in wrestling situations—and because of the extreme mobility of the combatants (underwater combats are fought in three dimensions).

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RANGED COMBAT

SHOOTING TESTS

Any character equipped with a readied firearm may attack in his Action Phase. Notions of attacker and defender are not relevant to ranged combat because Opposed Tests do not apply to them. A Shooting Test is a normal Test based on the appropriate Skill (normally this means a Random Test, although you can use the rules for Non Random Tests to determine the average results for a character who is practicing at a shooting range). The Difficulty Modifier is based on essentially two factors: the distance to the target and its size. The two tables below indicate the Modifier to use:

DISTANCE	MODIFIER
Point Blank Range	+5
Short Range	+0
Medium Range	-5
Long Range	-10
Extreme Range	-15

Note: the ranges (in meters) for the various firearms are listed in the **Gear** chapter in *CRB2*, page 8. The following range breakdown is intended as a general guideline to possible Modifiers; it is not a set of commandments carved in stone.

SIZE OF TARGET	MODIFIER
Tiny (around 30 cm)	-10
Very Small (around 50 cm)	-5
Small (around 1 m)	-3
Medium (human size)	+0
Large (around 3 m)	+3
Very Large (around 5 m)	+5
Enormous (around 7 m)	+10
Gigantic (10 m +)	+15

FIRING BLIND

For characters firing blindly, in total darkness or when the target is completely behind cover (for example, when a target is totally concealed behind something), use the following procedure:

- First, the shooter must carry out an Opposed Observation Test (usually based on his hearing), with a penalty of -5 versus the target's *Stealth/Move silently* Skill, in order to more precisely locate it (no shot is possible unless the target makes some kind of noise).
- He must then make a successful Shooting Test, with a penalty of -15 + the Success or Failure Modifier generated by the *Observation* Test. All the other Modifiers referred to above also apply.
- Should the Shooting Test succeed, he must then make a successful Luck Test, modified by the Success or Failure Modifier generated by the Shooting Test.

Depending on the circumstances, other Modifiers may be applicable as set out on the following table:

SITUATION	MODIFIER
Moving target:	
• Moderate Speed	-3
• Fast Speed	-5
• Maximum Speed	-7
Moving shooter:	
• Slow Speed	-3
• Moderate Speed	-5
• Fast Speed	-7
• Maximum Speed	No shooting allowed
Target behind cover:	
• Partial (50% of the body covered)	-3
• Mostly behind cover (75% of the body covered)	-5
Darkness/Low visibility (or target obscured by smoke, gas, etc.):	
• Light hindrance	-3
• Major	-5
• Total	No shooting allowed
**except for firing blind (see above)*	

SINGLE-SHOT FIRING TECHNIQUES

Most weapons fire in Single-Shot Mode; for some, this is the only way they can fire. A character may choose any of the single-shot firing techniques described here.

SNAP SHOT

The shooter raises his weapon and fires a single bullet without taking trouble to aim. This is the simplest kind of shot a character can fire, short of shooting himself in the foot while drawing his gun. Technically, it's also the least effective shooting technique in a firefight since so little aiming is involved (it's not quite as bad as firing wildly in all directions, but close) and the shooter cannot correct his aim. The only advantage of a snap shot is that it conserves ammunition while retaining normal Initiative.

RAPID FIRE

Rapid fire is probably the most effective single-shot technique. The character simply fires several shots in quick succession, as opposed to a single shot. With each new shot, the shooter can adjust his aim, increasing his chances of hitting (even though this kind of shooting is still not very accurate). Of course, the objective is to fire the maximum

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number of rounds at the target in the minimum possible time. This method does tend to use up a lot of ammo, so a shooter in Rapid Fire Mode must always specify the number of bullets he's going to use (at least 2). **He then gains a +1 bonus on his Shooting Test for each bullet fired after the first (up to a maximum bonus of +3).** He may also choose to fire more than 4 bullets (up to a maximum of 10). In that case, for every 3 extra bullets fired, he gets one of the following benefits: either an additional +1 bonus on his Shooting Test (which is added to the initial +3 bonus, thus making it possible to raise it as high as +5) or a +3 bonus on damage (at Short range only).

AIMED SHOTS (EXCLUSIVE ACTION)

With this technique the character takes time to adjust his aim but this will cost him in Initiative. He can only fire one shot at a time this way and cannot move. **Aimed shots employ the "Delayed Actions" principle: at the beginning of his usual Action Phase, and for each increment of 2 Initiative points spent, the shooter gets a +1 bonus on his Shooting Test (up to a maximum of +5).**

AUTOMATIC FIRE MODES

Automatic weapons can fire in bursts. Characters opting to fire in Automatic Mode must employ the Skill *Handguns* or *Shoulder-fired Weapons/Rifles* (depending on the weapon),. Changing to a different Fire Mode counts as a Preparation, which costs 3 Initiative points. Depending on the weapon and its capabilities, the character will have the choice between two kinds of bursts: short and long.

SHORT BURST

Some automatic weapons fire in this mode. It consists of a 3-round burst that provides some of the advantages of automatic fire, but wastes far less ammo. A character firing in this mode can choose one of the following effects: either a +3 bonus on his Shooting Test or a +5 on Damage (but only at Point Blank or Short range).

LONG BURSTS (EXCLUSIVE ACTION)

Weapons on Long Burst Mode keep firing for as long as the character presses the trigger or until the magazine is empty. The character must specify how many rounds are to be fired, from a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 20. If the weapon is not capable of firing at least 5 rounds, then treat this as a short burst instead. **For each group of 5 shots fired**, the character gains a +2 bonus on his Shooting Test as well as a +2 on Damage (at Point Blank and Short range only).

LONG BURSTS AGAINST MULTIPLE TARGETS (EXCLUSIVE ACTION)

Firing a long burst in a circular arc will hit more targets, but only at Short to Medium range. The character can designate a different target for every group of 5 rounds fired. These targets may not be more than 3 meters apart (unless the character opts to spend one of his 5-round bursts on making up for the extra distance). He must then carry out a Shooting Test for each target, unmodified at Short range, but with a -5 penalty at Medium range.

SUPPRESSIVE FIRE

Suppressive (or covering) fire involves spraying an area (or a precise location, such as a door) with a stream of bullets in order to force an adversary to stay under cover or to pin him down. Automatic weapons are the best suited for covering fire through the use of long bursts or a series of short bursts (which can also be combined into one long burst). In Single Shot Mode, only rapid-fire shooting can produce covering fire, and even then it will require lots of ammo.

Covering fire will spray a zone of about 3 meters. The Player should specify the number of bullets fired by his character and carry out a normal Shooting Test. For every 5 rounds fired, the character can cover an additional 3 meters or receive a +2 bonus on his Shooting Test. Make a note of the Success or Failure Modifiers.

Any adversary in the firing zone covered (or attempting to cross it) must carry out a Luck Test, with his level modified by the shooter's bonus or penalty. Unlike the usual practice, a Success Modifier will reduce the adversary's Luck level while a Failure Modifier will increase it. Partial cover, darkness, or gas obscuring the shooter's vision can provide a +3 to +10 bonus on

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the Luck Test, at the discretion of the GM. In the event of a Failure, the character takes a bullet to a random hit Location. A Player Character exposed to covering fire can always spend one Luck point to succeed on the Test, but he must then immediately take cover if his adversaries maintain their covering fire during the following Combat Rounds.

Note: covering fire is, of course, an Exclusive Action.

PRECISION FIRE (SNIPERS)

Precision fire is a Long-range Firing Mode, carried out by a weapon equipped with a telescopic scope. Even though it is, in theory, both a single shot and an aimed shot, the precision shot is not governed by the usual rules for single shots (automatic fire is useless at Long range). The key thing to remember about precision shots is that the shooter requires time to adopt a stable firing position, adjust his scope, and calculate the necessary corrections to compensate for the amount the bullet will "drift" depending on the distance, wind, etc. The greater the distance, the more essential it is to take the time to do this right, from a few Combat Rounds for a close shot to several minutes for a shot at Extreme range. It's all up to the GM.

FIRING TWO GUNS AT ONCE

A character may use two handguns, one in each hand, provided he can handle them (see the **Gear** chapter in *CRB2* on page 8). This gives him the following benefits:

- **Single Shots, Rapid Fire, Short Bursts:** the character gets *either* a +3 bonus on his Shooting Test (for Single Shots this simply cancels out the inherent penalty), *or* the option of attacking two targets. For the latter option, he gets two Shooting Tests, the second shot (the one made with the non-primary hand) is carried out with the Success Probability reduced by half.
- **Long Bursts, Covering Fire:** the character gets a +5 bonus on his Shooting Test.
- **Long Burst at Multiple Targets:** the character can fire his second weapon independently against other adversaries. In this case, he carries out two Shooting Tests, the second shot (the one made with the non-primary hand) with the Success Probability reduced by half.

Note: it is impossible to make an Aimed Shot while using two weapons.

DAMAGE

Whenever someone hits his adversary as a result of a Combat Test, whether it is with his bare hands or with a weapon, he can inflict physical Damage on him. The process is very simple: first determine the Hit Location and then roll for Damage.

DAMAGE AND WOUND POINTS

A character who hits his adversary will inflict physical Damage points equal to:

- **In melee:** Weapon Damage + Success Modifier + character's Melee Damage Modifier.
- **In ranged combat:** Weapon Damage + Success Modifier

To this base total of damage, **you must also add the Modifier for the target character's Damage Resistance.** A strong and tough character will naturally incur less serious damage, just as a weaker individual will incur greater damage. The final total must be compared to the character's Wound Thresholds: every 5 points of damage increases the severity of the wound by one threshold. The wound inflicted corresponds to the highest threshold crossed. The function of wounds and their effects are treated in detail in the chapter **States of Health** on page 232.

HIT LOCATION

The Hit Location is then determined by rolling 1D20 on the Hit Location Table, which is also shown on the character sheet. Of course, in situations where the Hit Location is obvious there is no need to roll to establish it. You will also notice that Damage can vary depending on the type of combat. This is simply because in melee combat, blows tend

HIT LOCATION TABLE

1D20	DISTANCE	CONTACT (OPTIONAL)	1D20
1	Head	Head	1
2			2
3	Body		3
4			4
5		Body	5
6			6
7			7
8			8
9	Right arm		9
10			10
11		Right arm	11
12	Left arm		12
13			13
14		Left arm	14
15	Right leg		15
16			16
17		Right leg	17
18	Left leg		18
19		Left leg	19
20			20

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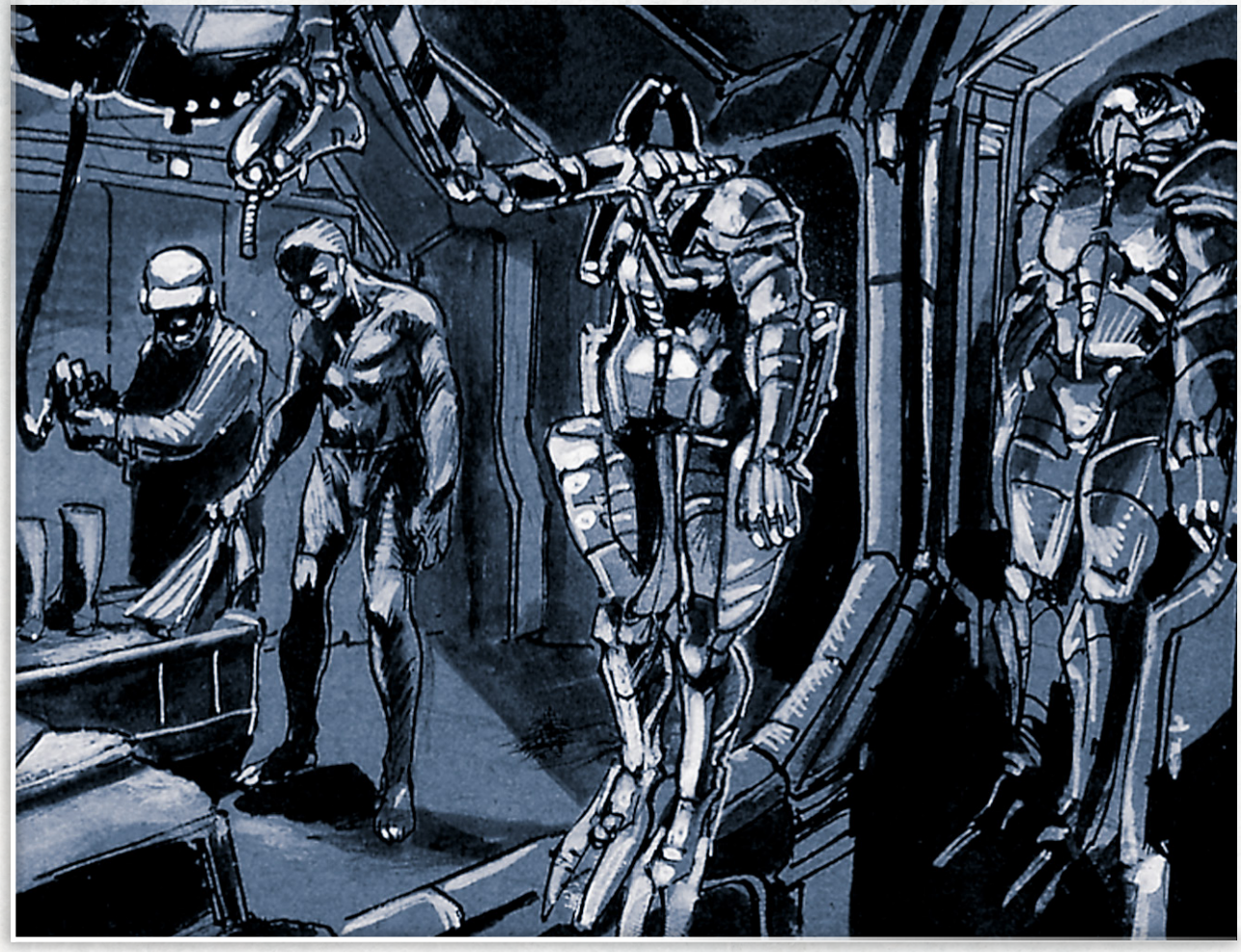

to land more on the upper body and less on the legs. You can simply choose to restrict the Hit Location to ranged combat situations, if you wish. Sometimes you may have to adjust the result a bit, especially if the Hit Location is protected by an object or an element of the décor that provides cover.

The Player then ticks off one of the squares corresponding to the level of wound received at the corresponding Hit Location. The rules for Wound Squares are set out in detail in the chapter **States of Health** on page 232.

TARGETING A SPECIFIC LOCATION

Generally, targeting an exact Hit Location is difficult because, in essence, combat is all about seizing every opportunity to strike one's adversary. Combatants strive to hit each other whenever and wherever they can. For those who opt to target a specific location on their adversary, apply the following penalties:

- **Body:** -3
- **Legs:** -5
- **Head/Arms:** -7
- **A very precise Hit Location (shoulder, stomach, hand, knee, etc.)**: -7 to -10

All these penalties are intended as guidelines only and can be modified as circumstances require.

PROTECTION

PROTECTIONS AND SIMPLE ARMOR

This refers to all protections and non-powered body armor: reinforced clothing, bulletproof vests, combat suits, etc. These kinds of protective gear, properly employed, can reduce the damage inflicted on the wearer **by absorbing a number of Damage points equal to their Protection value**. These basic types of protective gear only protect certain Locations. For example, a bulletproof vest only protects the body, just as a helmet only protects the head. Of course, one is always free to target an unprotected Hit Location in order to inflict more damage.

In most cases, the effects of multiple layers of protective gear are not stacked (piling on multiple layers of armor would limit a character's movement too much). The GM is, however, always free to interpret matters as she chooses; for example, applying a higher bonus to Locations that are more heavily protected, if she deems this appropriate.

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For more details about protective gear and simple armor, see the **Gear** chapter in *CRB2*, page 8.

PERSONAL FORCE FIELDS

Personal force fields are generated by very complex devices, which envelope the character in a protective force field. Technically, they cover all Hit Locations on the body and function as simple protection: their Protection value is subtracted from the total points of physical Damage inflicted.

SHIELDS

Shields seldom come up in the *Polaris RPG* universe, but characters are always free to use them. Shield effects vary depending on the kind of combat in which it is employed: melee or ranged.

In melee combat, using a "shield" (of any kind) imposes a penalty on the adversary's Attack Test. This penalty should be determined by the GM, depending on the size and efficacy of the shield, for example:

- -3: small shield (30–50 cm in diameter).
- -5: medium shield (50 cm to 1 m).
- -7: large shield (riot shields, for example)

In ranged combat, especially with firearms, shields do not impose any penalties whatsoever on an adversary's Attack Test. The shield in that case functions as a simple protection that automatically protects a certain number of Hit Locations:

- **Small shield:** only the arm holding the shield (and possibly one Hit Location—Body or Head—provided a successful Luck Test is made).
- **Medium shield:** arm holding the shield +1 Hit Location (Body, Head, or Leg on the side covered by the shield).
- **Large shield:** arm holding the shield +2 Hit Locations (Body, Head, or Leg on the side covered by the shield).

The shield deducts its Protection value from any damage inflicted on any Hit Location covered by the shield, as determined by the GM depending on its solidity (generally 3 to 10 points). This protection only applies if the attack can be intercepted by the shield (so if the character is shot from behind, the shield has no effect).

Note: against thrown or projectile weapons (such as bows, cross-bows, spearguns) shields are governed by the rules for melee (i.e. the attacker incurs a penalty on his Attack Test).

IMPROVISED SHIELDS

In a pinch, a variety of objects (metal sheets, a chair or a stool, a coffee table, etc.) can be used as improvised shields. The Protection value and penalty imposed on the adversary's Melee Attack Test depends on the nature and size of the object employed, but in most cases the "shield" wielder will also incur a penalty to his own Attack Test due to the unwieldiness of his improvised shield.

BARRIERS

"Barrier" is the term used to describe any physical structure capable of protecting a character behind it: walls, doors, reinforced glass, etc. A barrier functions just like a simple protection; it absorbs a certain number of Damage points depending on its solidity (and thickness). The Protection value can also range from 3 points for flimsier materials (such as plastic partitions, plywood, or thick glass) to 10 or more for reinforced materials. It is up to the GM to determine the exact Protection value where necessary, but always staying true to the *Polaris RPG* universe, which is based on the existence of extremely solid materials (such as molecular steel and glass) that are totally impervious to normal weapons or to anything less than high explosives or a rocket.

FIRING AT UNDERWATER TARGETS

Water offers a very effective protection against a wide variety of weapons when shots are fired from the open air at an underwater target. All small projectiles have a tendency to deviate from their trajectory and go into a spin as soon as they hit water. What is more, their velocity is greatly reduced by the resistance exerted by the liquid they are passing through. For every 5 cm of water between him and his target, a character using a weapon not designed for underwater use incurs a -1 penalty for his Shooting Test and any Damage is reduced by 2 points. Certain weapons are utterly useless against underwater targets (for example, a single centimeter of water is all it takes to stop a laser beam).

RANGED COMBAT WITH UNDERWATER WEAPONS

Underwater, because of the environment's particularities, all ranged weapons with a maximum range of 50 meters have a penalty of -1 to all shooting tests. All others ranged weapons, with a maximum range over 50 meters, have a penalty of -2 to all shooting tests.

SPECIAL WEAPONS

WHIPS AND CHAINS

Whips and chains can be used to entangle an adversary. The character must target a specific part of the body, generally the neck, an arm or a hand-held weapon, or one or both legs. He must then carry out a Test for the appropriate Skill with a penalty of -5 (for an arm, either leg, neck) or -7 (for a weapon or both legs at once). If successful, the character has managed to get a hold of his adversary. He may then pull the enemy closer, or attempt to throw or disarm him. This action counts as an Attack. Both combatants must then carry out Opposed Strength Tests, the defender rolling with a penalty of -5 if he's been seized by the leg and his adversary

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is attempting to make him fall (this becomes a -7 penalty if he's been ensnared around both legs). If he fails, he loses balance and falls. He may, however, attempt to get loose once each following Combat Round by performing a Coordination Test.

SHOTGUNS

A shotgun projects a cloud of projectiles, thus increasing the shooter's odds of hitting the target. All targets present in the zone affected by the blast—which fans out in the form of cone—are automatically hit. The advantage of this kind of weapon is that you don't really need to aim: even on a failed Shooting Test the targets are still hit. On the other hand, the Failure Modifier reduces the damage. Despite all these advantages, shotguns are not very effective except at relatively close range, as the dispersion of the pellets reduces the damage at a greater range. Here are the effects of a shotgun blast by range:

- **Point-Blank range (less than 2 m):** the blast only hits one target, the base damage is increased by +1D10.
- **Short range (2–7 m):** the blast covers a 1-meter-wide zone and does normal damage.
- **Medium range (8–15 m):** the blast covers a 2-meter-wide zone and damage is reduced by -1D10.
- **Long range (15–25 m):** the blast covers a 3-meter-wide zone, damage is reduced by -2D10. In addition, the targets can attempt a Luck Test to avoid being hit.
- **Extreme range (25–50 m):** the blast covers a 3-meter-wide zone, damage is reduced by -3D10. The targets can attempt a Luck Test (rolling with a +5 bonus) to avoid being hit.

Shotgun pellets also have very limited penetrating power. Any character located behind someone else hit by the blast or behind sufficient cover will not be damaged. Anyone wearing a bulletproof vest or located behind light cover (such as a door or wall of average thickness) gets an extra 3 points of protection.

Note: a shotgun can be used in either Single-shot or Rapid-fire Mode (that's one of its *raisons d'être*). This latter firing mode makes it particularly devastating as the blast can then cover a much larger zone. Rapid-firing a shotgun is an Exclusive Action.

FLAMETHROWERS

Like shotguns, flamethrowers are weapons with an Area of Effect. All targets exposed to the blast are affected (even in the event of a Shooting Test Failure they are still hit, but the Failure Modifier reduces the Damage). Continuous firing allows a wider zone to be covered (this kind of shot is treated as an Exclusive Action).

A flamethrower does 2D10 points of Physical Damage from the fire, at 1D3 Hit Locations. In addition, the liquid splashed on the target continues to burn, doing 2D10 points of Damage for 2D6 Combat Rounds or until extinguished. Finally, simple protections are far less effective against this kind of weapon: their Protection value is reduced by half.

Note that flamethrowers have a relatively short range (however, unlike shotguns, the damage they do does not decrease with distance). On the other hand, the shooter must stand at least 3 meters from his target or risk being engulfed by the flaming liquid from his own weapon.

GRENADES AND MINES

Grenades and land mines project a cloud of tiny, but deadly, shards of metal around their Area of Effect, inflicting physical Damage.

A mine explodes when an intruder triggers it, either because he walked on it or because the mine detected his presence in some other way (laser, movement, etc.). The *Traps* Skill enables a character to place and hide a mine or build more sophisticated booby-trapping systems.

As for grenades, they need to be armed (unpinned) and thrown. The whole of this Action takes a full Combat Round and requires a Coordination Test with a Difficulty depending on the area targeted by the character (use the Modifiers for shooting Tests, linked to the size of the targets). If the Test result is a Failure, the grenade doesn't fall exactly where it was supposed to, falling away from that spot by a number of meters equal to the Failure Modifier, and in a direction—relative to the center of the initially targeted area—determined randomly with 1D6.

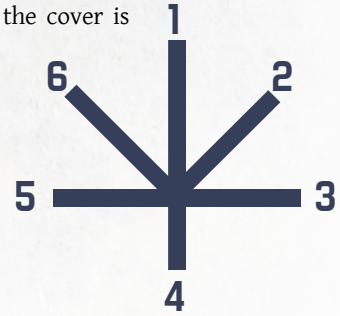
The grenade then explodes during the next Combat Round at the usual Initiative of the character who threw it. The damage inflicted by a grenade will depend on the distance between the point of explosion and the targets:

- **Center of the explosion (Area of Effect of less than 2 meters in diameter):** 1D3 Locations hit, base Damages increased by +1D10.
- **Short range (2 to 5 meters in diameter):** normal Damage.
- **Medium range (5 to 10 meters in diameter):** Damage reduced by 1D10.
- **Long range (10 to 20 meters in diameter):** Damage reduced by 2D10. Furthermore, the targets are allowed to take a Luck Test to see if they can avoid being hit.
- **Extreme range (20 to 30 meters in diameter):** Damage reduced by 3D10. The targets can take a Luck Test with a +5 bonus to see if they can avoid being hit.

Unburied mines follow the same rules, but buried mines have a range that is reduced by half. Furthermore, if a buried mine is activated by a character stepping on it, the first Location to be hit is a Leg.

Individual protections work as usual when it comes to mines and grenades. Total cover completely protects the character (as long as the cover is sufficiently resistant); partial cover will reduce the Damage by 1D10 or 2D10, depending on the protection it provides.

Note: the reduction of Damage depending on the distance is also relevant to Shock Damage.



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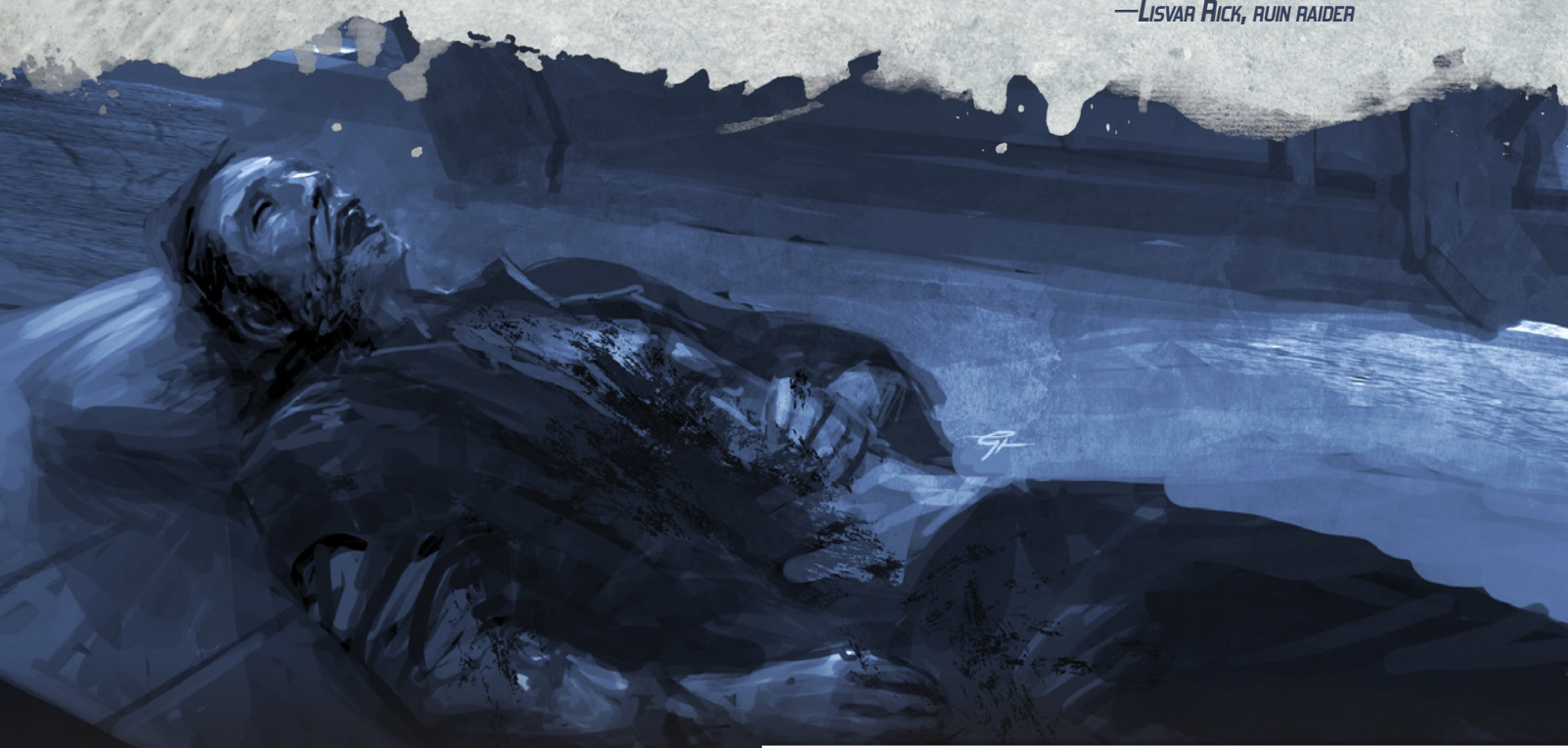
CHAPTER 3.3

STATES OF HEALTH

"In the ruins of an ancient city, I came across a tiny piece of paper covered in plastic with text that read: "Never go out without a condom!" The people of the ancient times were so very sensible, and poetic too! Of course, one should never venture outside without a Stabilizing Patch, and I find the word "condom" so much more colorful and elegant than "Stabilizing Patch" when it comes to describing the little technological wonder that prevents you from bleeding out. "

—Lisvar Rick, ruin raider



PHYSICAL WOUNDS

In the world of the *Polaris RPG*, conflicts are violent and dangerous. The characters will be faced with many different perils, and sooner or later, it will happen to them: one of them will get a nasty wound caused by a large caliber bullet, by the fangs of a vicious creature, or by a microscopic, but deadly, virus. If that does happen, then you're in the right chapter.

The Wound rules presented below are purposely detailed, to heighten the realistic and gritty atmosphere of the world of the *Polaris RPG*. If you don't want to go into such detail, you should feel free to simplify things and do without the many optional rules that you will find throughout this chapter. **The only really important rule in this section is the one about physical wound thresholds.** This rule allows you to connect the Damage Points received and the severity of the inflicted Wound. The rest is made up of logical developments that you definitely shouldn't let slow you down.

WOUND THRESHOLDS

Physical Wounds are classified depending on their level of severity. Each level of Wound severity is associated with a fixed **Wound Threshold**. As soon as the sum of physical Damage Points inflicted becomes equal to or larger than one of these thresholds, the character receives the equivalent Wound:

THRESHOLD	SERIOUSNESS
5	Light Wounds
10	Moderate Wounds
15	Serious Wounds
20	Critical Wounds
25	Mortal Wounds
30	Sudden Death/Limb Destroyed

Note: *You will find in the Advanced rules optional thresholds for Characters and creatures.*

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Note: don't forget that the rules for Luck can allow a character to reduce the severity of his inflicted wounds (see the chapter on **Tests & Actions** on page 200).

WOUND SCALE						
WOUNDS	Head	Body	Right Arm	Left Arm	Right Leg	Left Leg
Light (5)	☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐
Moderate (10)	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐
Serious (15)	☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐
Critical (20)	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐
Mortal (25)	☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐	☐	☐
Death/Limb Destroyed	Death	Death	☐	☐	☐	☐

WOUND SCALE (CHARACTER SHEET)

The total number of Wounds that a character can receive is limited. As soon as a character is wounded, the Player must tick one of the boxes on the Wound Scale as shown above and as can be found on the character sheet, depending on the Location of the hit and the severity of the wound.

In each Location, when all of the boxes of a line have been ticked and the character receives another Wound of the same severity, the Player should then:

1. **Tick a box** in the next higher degree of severity.
2. **Erase the Wounds** noted in the boxes of the completed line.

Therefore, the total of the Wounds inflicted at a certain level of severity ends up creating a wound of a higher severity.

Reminder: the rules of Locating Wounds can be found in the **Combat** chapter, in the **Damages** section on page 226.

DESCRIPTION AND EFFECTS OF WOUNDS

Below you will find a list of the descriptions of Damage severities and the trauma that corresponds to each type of Wound. As soon as a character receives a Wound, he immediately suffers its effects. ***Optional:*** these can change depending on the severity of the damage and the Location that has been hit. The optional rules **Worsening of wounds** and **Aftereffects** are detailed in *CRB2* on page 200.

Light Wounds

Bruises, small cuts, first-degree burns on a small area. These wounds are slightly painful, but they are not bad enough to hinder a character all that much. They usually heal on their own and have very little chance of getting worse.

- **Penalty for Tests** (general penalty for shock test)**:** -1.
- ***Optional:*** **Worsening factors:** Overactivity (*CRB2* on page 200).

Moderate Wounds

Strained muscles, light sprains, deeper cuts that haven't hit any major blood vessels, second-degree burns (or first-degree burns over a large area). These injuries are not all that dangerous on their own, but the pain they cause can start to be really annoying. There are other risks (not very high, however) that these wounds might get worse, but mainly in poor sanitary conditions (Infections) or if the character is overactive.

- **Penalty for Tests** (general penalty for shock test)**:** -3.
- ***Optional:*** **Worsening factors:** Infection, Overactivity (*CRB2* on page 200)..

Serious Wounds

Torn muscles or tendons, serious sprains and dislocations, fractured bones, deep cuts that have damaged a medium-sized major blood vessel, second-degree burns over a wide area. These injuries have caused some serious damage without, however, being immediately life-threatening. The pain is very intense, and the effects are increasingly impairing (the wounded character can't easily use an injured arm or leg, he will have difficulty breathing with cracked ribs, and could become dizzy or even unconscious if he suffers from a head wound). If these injuries are not treated properly, there is a serious chance that they will get worse, and this will definitely be the case if the character is overactive (see Worsening of Wounds in *CRB2* on page 200).

- **Penalty for Tests** (general penalty for shock test)**:** -5.
- **Effects:**
  - **Legs:** movement at a maximum of Moderate Speed.
  - **Body:** movement at a maximum of Moderate Speed, Shock Test required (no penalties).
  - **Head:** movement at a maximum of Moderate Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -5).
- ***Optional:*** **Aftereffects** (Head Wounds only) (*CRB2* on page 201).
- ***Optional:*** **Worsening factors:** Infection, Overactivity (*CRB2* on page 200).

Critical Wounds

Bone fractures, severe ligament tears, fragments of bone that have pierced a vital organ or blood vessel, deep wounds with severe hemorrhaging, third-degree burns over a wide area, damaged (non-vital) organ. These injuries have caused a lot of serious damage that worsen if they are not

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tended. The wounded character will often be groggy or even unconscious and he will require emergency care. If he does not receive medical attention, a serious handicap, or in some cases death, is inevitable in a fairly short amount of time.

- **Stabilization required,** but only for the Wounds that could cause a hemorrhage: bullet wounds or stab wounds, cuts, perforations, etc. **It is up to the GM to decide whether or not a Wound presents this kind of risk.**
- **Penalty for Tests** (general penalty for shock test)**:** -10.
- **Effects:**
  - **Arms:** movement at a maximum of Moderate Speed, Shock Test required (no penalties).
  - **Legs:** movement is impossible, Shock Test required (no penalties).
  - **Body:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -5).
  - **Head:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -10).
- ***Optional:* Aftereffects** (*CRB2* on page 201).
- ***Optional:* Worsening factors:** Infection, Overactivity (*CRB2* on page 200).

Mortal Wounds

Open bone fractures, extremely deep and wide cuts, severe hemorrhages, third-degree burns over the whole body, severely damaged vital organ (heart, lungs, brain, etc.). These injuries are extremely serious and usually fatal (even though death is not always immediate), especially if vital organs have been hit (Head and Body). The wounded character is unconscious most of the time. Even if he doesn't die immediately, he will need immediate medical attention or death will be unavoidable, and it will come quickly, depending on the affected organs. If by some miracle he survives, the aftereffects will be severe.

- **Stabilization required!** Imminent death!
- **Penalty for Tests:** does not apply, the wounded character can't carry out any Actions that would require a Test (general penalty for shock test : -15 or target automatically stunned).
- **Effects:**
  - **Arms:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -5).
  - **Legs:** movement is impossible, Shock Test required (penalty: -5).
  - **Body:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -10).
  - **Head:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -15).
- ***Optional:* Aftereffects** (*CRB2* on 201).

Sudden Death

A body ripped to shreds, a head chopped off, the lungs, heart, or brain destroyed. At that level of damage (often due to an accident, an explosion, a deadly fall), there's no hope left. The character dies immediately. General penalty for shock test: -30 or target automatically knockout.

Limb Destroyed

When a 'Sudden Death' equivalent wound occurs against an Arm or a Leg, the limb in question is ripped off or permanently destroyed (the character will be paralyzed and unable to use that limb any more). The character doesn't die immediately, but he does suffer the following effects:

- **Stabilization required!** Imminent death!
- **Penalty for Tests:** does not apply, the wounded character can't carry out any Actions that would require a Test (General penalty for shock test: -30 or target automatically knockout)..
- **Effects:**
  - **Arms:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -10).
  - **Legs:** movement is impossible, Shock Test required (penalty: -10).
- ***Optional:* Aftereffects** (*CRB2* on page 201).

The rules about the various effects of the Wounds—penalties for Tests, Shock, Stabilization—are detailed in the following sections.

SIMPLIFYING THE MANAGEMENT OF WOUNDS FOR NPCS

Many of the Non-Player Characters have **absolutely no need** for such an elaborate Wound system, which is reserved for the Player Characters and for their most important adversaries (in other words, the "big bad guy" of the scenario and his most important lieutenants). For most opponents, in the case of any Wounds, only take into account the highest level of damage, without bothering to manage the whole thing with little boxes to tick.

Also,, apart from a few exceptions, it is not necessary to kill an opponent to put him out of the picture: a Critical Wound is enough to incapacitate him and even a Serious Wound should make your enemy think twice about attacking you again (especially if he wasn't all that motivated in the first place). You might decide that, in the heat of the action and for minor NPCs, only Wounds with a score of 15 to 20 Damage Points stand between an opponent who is ready to attack again and an opponent who is out of the action. In fact, the GM should never hesitate to take such a decision, for the sake of the rhythm and the atmosphere of the game.

PENALTIES ON TESTS

As you have seen in the previous sections, each type of Wound inflicts **a penalty on all the Actions** that a wounded character tries to perform; this is a consequence of the pain and the stress. **These penalties are not cumulative:** no matter the number of Wounds suffered

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(see **Wound Scale** on page 233), only the highest penalty should be taken into account, the one that corresponds to the most serious of the Wounds (this applies even if the character has several Wounds of the same level of severity). Therefore, for a character who has received a Serious Wound (penalty: -5) and two Critical Wounds (penalty: -10), the final penalty is -10.

ABOUT PENALTIES DUE TO THE CHARACTER'S STATE OF HEALTH

All the elements that influence the character's state of health can inflict penalties on his Tests: physical wounds, of course, but also—if you are using the advanced rules—things like fatigue, stress, illnesses, etc. If the character is suffering from the effects of several of these problems, the rule is simple: **penalties are not cumulative; you should therefore only apply the highest one.**

STABILIZATION REQUIRED!

When it comes to the worst levels of Wounds (Critical Wound, Mortal Wound, and Limb Destroyed), the hemorrhage and the damage to the vital organs can have dramatic consequences, even a fast (but not necessarily painless) death in the case of the more serious ones. All of these Wounds require immediate stabilization in the form of a successful *First aid* Test (see **Care and Healing**, **Stabilizing a Wound** on page 236). Without stabilization (or if the result of the *First aid* Test is a Failure), the consequences are as follows:

- **Critical Wound:** apart from the normal effects of the Wound, the character won't have any complications for a number of minutes equal to his Constitution Attribute. After that, he will have to pass a Constitution Test. If he succeeds, he will have another period of (5 + Success Modifier) minutes without his condition worsening, and then he will have to take another Constitution Test. If he fails, the character has lost too much blood: the Critical Wound becomes a Mortal Wound. ***Note:*** stabilization is only required on Critical Wounds that present a risk of hemorrhage (this is the case for a cut or a perforation, but not necessarily for a fracture or a burn, for example).
- **Mortal Wound/Limb Destroyed:** the character can survive for a number of minutes equal to his Constitution Attribute before he dies.

After his death, only medical equipment of the very highest technology (and the competent doctors to go with it) can bring a character back to life by resuscitating him, as long as the death has not lasted for more than roughly 10 minutes (once this time has passed, the brain cells will have been irreparably damaged).

STUNNING AND KNOCK OUT DAMAGE

More than the usual physical Damage, some weapons can cause "Shock Damage" capable of stunning or knocking out a character. In general, it occurs with heavy and blunt weapons that cause Stunning Damage when they touch the adversary's head. The steps to follow are simple when an attack with this kind of weapon is localized to the Head:

- **Make the die roll that corresponds to the weapon's physical Damage,** and compare the total with the character's Wound threshold as usual. Note the possible Wound that may result (don't take Shock into account at this stage).
- **Next, make the die roll that corresponds to the weapon's additional Shock Damage (the character's Wound Resistance applies).** Add this additional Damage to the total physical Damage obtained in the previous step.
- **Compare this new total to the adversary's Wound threshold:** he must simply make a Shock Resistance Test (see below) with a penalty corresponding to the Wound threshold attained (see **Description and Effect of Wounds**, page 233), and suffer its possible effects.

Shock Damage is only virtual; it doesn't cause additional physical wounds, but increases the Difficulty of the Shock Resistance Test. For example, it's possible to hit someone with a club and only give him a big lump (weak physical Damage), but knock him out completely (serious Shock Damage).

Don't forget that with a normal weapon, causing additional Shock Damage is only possible with a hit to the head. Several weapons, however, are designed to inflict shock damage (shock weapons, sonic weapons, Mao truncheons, etc.). These weapons cause this damage, even if the hit isn't made to the head. Some of these weapons only cause Shock Damage (electric weapons, for instance). In this case, the procedure doesn't change. It's enough to just compare the Shock Damage with the character's Wound threshold, and apply the general penalty indicated by the severity of the virtual wound (**Penalty for Tests** entry).

Weapons designed to inflict Shock damage are generally calibrated for humans or similar targets. These weapons are less effective against tougher creatures. Against these, it is necessary to use special weapons, but a character can also adjust the power output of his weapon to inflict additional penalties to the Shock tests. All Shock weapons can be adjusted to inflict an additional -1 penalty for each additional ammunition used in the attack (damage is not augmented however). So if you use three ammos for your attack with a Shock pistol, the target will have a penalty of -2 to their Shock tests.

WOUNDS AND SHOCK

The most serious Wounds can Stun a character, or even render him Unconscious, not just because of the physical damage, but also because of the pain and the fear. You can use this rule or not, depending on the amount of realism you want to add to your games. In this case, the penalty for the wound threshold is noted in the entry Effects with the member affected.

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EFFECTS OF SHOCK, THE SHOCK RESISTANCE TEST

A character's Shock Resistance is made up of two figures: his Stun Threshold and his Knockout Threshold. Performing a Shock Resistance Test means that you roll 1D20 and then compare the result with these two Thresholds:

- **If the result of the roll is lower than or equal to the Stun Threshold,** the Test is a Success. The character does not suffer from the effects of the Shock.
- **If the result of the roll is higher than the Stun Threshold, but lower than or equal to the Knockout Threshold,** the character is *Stunned*.
- **If the result of the roll is higher than the Knockout Threshold,** the character is *Unconscious*.

Don't forget, some types of Wound inflict a penalty on Shock Tests (-1 for a light wound; -3 for a moderate wound, etc.; see **Description and Effects of Wounds** on page 233). This penalty is noted on the character sheet, next to the Wound Scale boxes. The stun threshold and the knockout threshold are reduced by this penalty.

A *Stunned* character is groggy and disoriented. He can't Attack any longer (but he can still attempt to defend himself) and suffers a penalty of -5 on all his Actions (as well as the normal penalty caused by the Wound). As he stumbles and wavers, his maximum movement speed is Moderate Speed (if he wants to move any faster than that, he must pass an Adaptation Test or fall down on the ground).

An *Unconscious* character has quite simply fainted. Of course, he can't carry out any Actions, he can't move at all, and he is oblivious to whatever is going on around him.

Example: a character has a stun threshold of 10 and a Knockout threshold of 20. He is hit by a shock weapon inflicting 1D10 physical damage +2D10 shock damage. The attack inflicts 9 physical damage (a light wound) and 15 shock damage. These damages correspond to a critical wound (9+15 = 24) but this wound is virtual. The character must make a shock resistance test with a penalty of -10 (general penalty for a critical hit). He will make his shock resistance check with a stun threshold of 0 (10 – 10) and a knockout threshold of 10 (20-10). He rolls 1D20 with a result of 6. He is not unconscious but stunned.

DURATION OF SHOCK

The duration of the Stun or the Knockout depends on the severity of the Wound that caused the Shock Test, as well as its Location (a Critical Failure followed by a Catastrophe could make things even worse), as indicated in the table.

Stabilization required: the character can't pull himself back together until his wound is stabilized.

Light Coma: the character can't be revived until the coma has ended. The Player then has to carry out a Luck Test every 1D6 hours; if he succeeds at the Test, his character awakens from the coma. After a whole day without a successful Test, the Test has to be taken once a day, and after a week, once a week. High-tech medical resources can very well give him a bonus on the Luck Tests (from +1 to +5 depending on the GM's decision).

Deep Coma: the character can't be revived until the coma has ended. In the case of a deep coma, the Player will then have to take a Luck Test once a day, with a level divided by two; if he succeeds, the character awakens from the coma. After seven days without a Success, the Test should be taken once a week, and after four weeks, once a month. High-tech medical resources can very well give him a bonus on the Luck Tests (from +1 to +5 depending on the GM's decision).

Note: an *Unconscious* character who wakes up is automatically *Stunned* for 1D6 minutes.

CARE AND HEALING

STABILIZING A WOUND

The *First aid* Skill allows a character to care for minor Wounds (see **First Aid** on page 18), but also, and more importantly, to stabilize any Wounds that may require it (this is a required Skill for any good emergency medical technician): Critical Wounds with a hemorrhage, Mortal Wounds, and Limbs Destroyed.

The character who is attempting to stabilize a Wound has to carry out a *First aid* Test, with the following penalty:

STUN, KNOCKOUT, AND CATASTROPHES

WOUND RECEIVED	LOCATION	STUN	KNOCKOUT	CATASTROPHE	SHOCK WEAPONS (STUN/KO)***
Light	Any location	-	-	-	1CR/1 minute
Moderate	Any location	-	-	-	1D6 CR/1D6 minutes
Serious	Head	2 CR*	2 minutes	1D6 minutes	2D6 CR/2D6 minutes
	Body	1 CR	1 minute	1 minute	
Critical	Head	3D6 CR	3D6 minutes	Light Coma	3D6 CR/3D6 minutes
	Body	2D6 CR	2D6 minutes	3D6 minutes	
	Arms/Legs	1D6 CR	1D6 minutes	2D6 minutes	
Mortal	Head	3D6 minutes	Light Coma **	Deep Coma **	4D6 CR/4D6 minutes
	Body	2D6 minutes	3D6 minutes	Stabilization required **	
	Arms/Legs	1D6 minutes	2D6 minutes	Stabilization required	
Limb Destroyed	Arms/Legs	2D6 minutes	3D6 minutes	Stabilization required	5D6 CR/5D6 minutes

** Combat Round* *** Special, see page 232* **** Any location*

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- **Critical Wounds:** +0
- **Mortal Wounds (Arm, Leg) or Limbs Destroyed:** -3
- **Mortal Wounds (Head, Body):** -5

The Wounds must be treated Location by Location, and logically, the more severe the wound, the higher the priority for treatment. If the line for the degree of the treated wound on the Wound Scale has more than one ticked box, the healer is given an additional penalty of -2 on the *First aid* Test. Each attempt requires a basic intervention time of 10 minutes, from which you should *subtract* the Success Modifier, or *add* the Failure Modifier. One more thing: the healer needs to have a fully stocked medical first-aid kit at his disposal or he will be given an additional penalty of -5 on his *First aid* Test.

If he succeeds at the Test, the Wound is stabilized. A Mortal Wound still remains extremely worrying, and will require constant attention from the healer. The GM can, of course, request new *First aid* Tests if the situation requires it (for example, after a number of minutes equal to the wounded character's Constitution score, after the character is moved from danger, etc.). A character who has received such a wound should indeed be taken to a hospital immediately or handed over to a competent surgeon who has all the necessary equipment at hand. If the Test result is a Failure, the stabilization has failed and the healer has wasted his time (don't forget that the survival time of the patient is limited).

DURATION OF HEALING AND NECESSARY CARE

For each level of Wound severity, the table indicates the time required for the character to heal, and the type of care required.

Each wound requires a **healing time**, which is measured in days and weeks. This is the minimum amount of time that a Wound requires to heal and turn into a less serious Wound. For example, after three weeks, a Mortal Wound can be transformed into a Critical Wound. The Wounds will continue to decrease in severity little by little until they disappear completely.

Note: a Limb Destroyed becomes a Critical Wound.

However, for a Wound to heal that easily, a certain number of conditions must be fulfilled. Most of the Wounds will require medical care, for a start. For some wounds, medical care is a necessity. As it is indicated in the **Necessary Care** column, all of these can be treated by a *Medicine* Test, the less severe ones can also be treated with a simple *First aid* Test. Ultimately, the most serious Wounds will require a successful *Surgery* Test before any phase of medical care.

The table also indicates the Difficulty Modifier to apply to the Test, depending on the severity of the Wound. Note that these Difficulties are dependent on appropriate treatment conditions: a healthy environment, medical equipment and medicines readily available, and a properly equipped operating room. If the doctor is forced to care for a wounded character without the appropriate equipment (sterile instruments and dressings, medicines, etc.), the penalties can be increased by 3 to 5 points, depending on the situation. A surgeon without equipment **cannot** operate on the wounded character. In this case, the GM can ask the character to take a Test against Infection. On the other hand, the GM can reduce the penalties if the wounded character is treated in a hospital equipped with high-tech medical resources.

All Wounds are treated Location by Location, regardless of the number of boxes ticked on each Wound line (put more simply, we consider that a doctor treats an "arm" or a "leg" rather than an "arm wound" or a "leg wound"). However, each additional ticked Wound box after the first one applies an additional cumulative penalty of -2 on the Test being carried out. Furthermore, some Wounds require **Constant Care**, which means that the *Medicine* Test has to be carried out once a week.

If the Test result is a Success, the healing is going well and the wounded character is recovering normally. If he has

MEDICAL CARE, OR SECRET EXPERIMENTATION?

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reached the end of the healing period that corresponds to his Wound, the Wound is reduced by one level of severity. A failed Test forces the wounded character to carry out one (and only one) Constitution Test for the current healing period, in order to fight the effects of Infection (see **Worsening of Wounds** and **Infection** in *CRB2* page 200). A Catastrophe can be the equivalent of a complete absence of care; the wounded character is then completely at the mercy of the rules of Infection and therefore has to take a Constitution Test every two days during the current healing period.

Light Wounds heal naturally on their own, and, in come cases, some medium-level Wounds (Moderate and Serious Wounds) can also be left without medical treatment. In this case, the character can only count on his natural ability to heal. ***Optional:*** All untreated wounds that DO require care are at risk of being worsened by Infection (see **Worsening of Wounds** and **Infection** in *CRB2* page 200).

APNEA

The Secondary Attribute Apnea indicates the number of Combat Rounds that a character can hold his breath. It takes a full Combat Round to fully breathe in; if the character is surprised and doesn't have time to prepare himself, his Apnea Level should be divided by two. Holding your breath is important if you want to avoid drowning when immersed in water, but it can also be useful if the character wants to avoid running out of oxygen or breathing in a toxic gas.

As soon as a character holds his breath, he begins to lose Apnea points (the Apnea Scale on the character sheet can be used to manage all of this). The speed at which a character will spend his Apnea points depends on the intensity of his activities:

- Motionless character: loses 1 Apnea point per Combat Round.
- Moderate activity (slow swimming pace, walking...): loss of 2 points per Round.
- Intense activity (fast swimming pace, running...): loss of 3 points per Round.
- Very intense activity (combat...): loss of 4 points per Round.

When a character has run out of Apnea points, he can still carry out an *Athletics* Test: the Success Modifier (if it is equal to or higher than 1) indicates the number of Combat Rounds that he gains before having to take a new Test. For each new Test, the character suffers a cumulative penalty equal to the number of Apnea points he has lost depending on his activity (for example, -2 for a moderate activity, -3 for an intense activity, etc.). As soon as he fails an *Athletics* Test, the character begins to drown (see **Drowning** in **Other Sources of Damage** on page 239), to asphyxiate, or suffer the effects of the toxic gas (which is not necessarily deadly; it can also be tear gas or tranquilizing gas).

OTHER SOURCES OF PHYSICAL DAMAGE

ACID

Most acids inflict progressive Damage (like the Damage caused by fire), with a certain rate over a specific period of time, or until the corrosive agent is neutralized in one manner or another. The Damage suffered depends on the strength of the acid. When a character is subjected to a corrosive atmosphere (acid rain on the Surface, for example), he suffers Damage until he escapes the danger zone. The effect of the acid can still persist for an additional 1D6 Combat Round(s) or until the corrosive agent is neutralized. Finally, certain substances affect some materials and not others. It is therefore useful to specify if the substance corrodes metal, flesh, etc. Generally, the product or method that neutralizes the acid is also indicated.

COLD

In the deep sea, cold is a major danger. There's no need to be plunged directly into icy water to feel its effects; a few generators break down and the whole station or ship slowly grows cold. The cold grows more dangerous as the temperature falls, and it can render a character unconscious or even cause terrible frostbite:

HEALING DURATION AND NECESSARY CARE

WOUNDS	HEALING DURATION	NATURAL HEALING?	NECESSARY CARE	DIFFICULTY	CONSTANT CARE?
Light Wounds	1 day	Yes	**None**	-	No
Moderate Wounds	3 days	Yes	*Medicine* **or** *First aid*	+5	No
Serious Wounds	1 week	Yes	*Medicine* **or** *First aid*	+3	No
Critical Wounds	3 weeks	No	*Medicine*	+0	Yes
Mortal Wounds	5 weeks	No	*Surgery* + *Medicine*	*Arm/Leg:* -3 *Body:* -5 *Head:* -7	Yes
Limbs Destroyed	3 weeks	No	*Surgery* + *Medicine*	-3	Yes

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- Cold (between 10 and 15°C): at this temperature, the cold does not yet have any real physical effects, but it exhausts the organism. A character must submit to an Endurance Test (Constitution) every 2 hours.
- Very cold (between 5 and 10°C): same as above, but the Test must be done every hour.
- Glacial (around 0°C): same as above, but the Test must be done every half-hour. Moreover, at this temperature, cold causes physical Damage:
  - **After an hour, the Arms and Legs are affected first:** these Locations suffer 1D10 points of physical Damage. Next, for each additional hour that passes in this environment, the character suffers a new cold attack on these Locations, but the damage worsens by 1D10 each time (2D10 the second hour, 3D10 the third hour, etc.). If the cold inflicts a Critical Wound, amputation of several fingers or toes is inevitable. A Mortal Wound or higher may require the amputation of a limb.
  - **After two hours, the damage extends to the Body and the Head,** which suffer physical Damage of their own on the hour, following the same rules as above (1D10, then 2D10, 3D10, etc.).
- Extreme cold (below 0°C): no one can survive at temperatures this low without adequate protection. For every 5°C below 0°C, you can apply the rules above, while dividing the indicated amount of time by half every time.

If the character performs a tiring action (running, swimming, fighting, etc.), the GM is free to demand Endurance Tests more often. Note that these rules concern the effects of cold in open air: **if the character is in the water (or if his clothes are wet), every amount of time indicated above must be divided in half.**

Optional: for Wounds caused by freezing, the GM can, if she wishes, apply the optional rules for Wounds caused by fire, (in *CRB2* page 203).

A station or a medium-sized ship typically offers an average temperature of 20°C. In the case of a heating system breakdown, the GM may dramatize a steadily decreasing temperature, depending on the situation. A normally dressed character suffers normal cold effects. With warm clothing, the temperature may be considered to be 5 to 15 degrees warmer, depending on their quality. A character dressed in clothing or in a wetsuit adapted for intense cold can even ignore the temperature's effects (up to a certain point). A character who is wearing diving armor normally has no problems, but if the heating system breaks down, he begins to suffer the effects of cold very rapidly.

Note: Hybrids (of all types) do not feel the effects of cold when they are underwater.

DROWNING/ASPHYXIATION

A character starts to drown or asphyxiate when he has no more Apnea points (see "Apnea," above). He then sinks into unconsciousness in 2D6 Combat Rounds, and suffers all the complications of drowning (respiratory arrest, followed by cardiac arrest). If nothing is done for him, the character dies after about five to seven minutes. Before that, a character who is competent in *First Aid* can always attempt to resuscitate him (provided that the necessary first aid supplies are available). In any case, his Test is subject to a penalty equal to double the number of minutes that have passed since the individual stopped breathing (each resuscitation attempt takes three minutes). After seven or eight minutes, all hope is exhausted (unless very highly technological equipment is employed).

Note: in glacial water (0°C or less), the chances of survival are slightly higher, because the cold better preserves brain cells. The penalty for the Test of *First Aid* in 0°C or less is equal to the number of minutes of asphyxiation.

DECOMPRESSION

Technically, decompression is likely to affect the whole body, but to simplify things this game localizes physical Damage in the Body. A character who does not respect the stages of decompression while breathing a mix suffers **1D10 points o**f physical Damage in the Body on each Round (this Damage can even increase to 2D10 if the character misses several stages of decompression). The only way to stop the phenomenon is to place the individual into a hyperbaric chamber, or to go back down to the last stage that was completed (if that's possible). The character must then complete the necessary decompression time.

FALLS

The Damage from a fall depends primarily on the height:

- Ground level: 1D6 if the character is running at maximum Speed (or if he gets a Catastrophe on a Test of Acrobatics/Balance, see below), 1 Location affected.
- 1 meter: 1D6, 1 Location affected.
- 2 meters: 1D10, 1 Location affected.
- 3 meters: 2D10, 1 Location affected.
- 4 meters: 3D10, 1D3 Location(s) affected.
- Beyond: +1D10/meter, 1D3+3 Location(s) affected.

The Locations affected are determined by chance, using the table of Locations for ranged combat, page 228. The protection offered by armor is reduced by half.

Note: if the character falls onto very rugged/cluttered terrain (gravel, scrap metal, broken glass), the Damage is increased by 1D10 points. The Damage from falling is limited to 10D10, after which it becomes Massive Damage, no matter the height of the fall.

A character who falls, and who is able to control his fall*, has the right to make a Test of *Acrobatics/Balance*, with a penalty equal to the height of the fall x 2 (for example, -4 for a fall of 2 meters). In the event of a Success, the Damage is reduced by 1D6 + the Success Modifier. Beyond five meters, it is impossible to reduce the Damage from a fall.

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* If the GM is not sure, she can ask for a Reaction Test. It is also appropriate if the fall is sudden (for example, if the ground falls away from under the character's feet or if someone pushes him off a ledge by surprise).

FIRE

The Damage caused by fire depends on its intensity, as well as the exposure time, as measured in Combat Rounds, until the flames are extinguished or the person is no longer exposed to the fire:

- Small flame: 1D6/Round, on the exposed Location.
- Medium-sized fire: 1D10/Round, on the exposed Location. Clothing that catches fire on a character inflicts this type of Damage.
- Large fire: 2D10/Round, on 1D3 Location(s). A character who is doused with flammable liquid before being set afire suffers this type of Damage (it is also a much more difficult fire to put out).
- Inferno: 3D10/Round on all locations.

Some flame-retardant protective clothing can considerably reduce the damage caused by fire. Don't forget that a fire can have other harmful effects: asphyxiating and blinding toxic fumes, intense heat, and even the exhaustion of oxygen resources in an enclosed space! Finally, being confronted with a serious fire can be extremely stressful, especially for vulnerable characters (Hybrids, for example) or for most animals, who will do anything to get away safely.

HUNGER AND THIRST

A character who suffers from malnutrition or under-eating will see his Strength, Constitution, and Willpower levels divided by half. A character who eats nothing loses 1 point of Strength and 1 point of Constitution each week. If one of these two Attributes falls below 3, he dies of starvation. If the character starts to eat normally again, it will still take a few weeks, perhaps even months, to regain his Attribute levels. Cold weather requires individuals to eat more often.

A lack of drinking water has even more extreme effects: no one can survive more than three days without drinking under normal conditions (only one or two days in very hot conditions). For each day that passes without drinking, the character suffers a penalty of -5 on all his Tests.

PRESSURE/NEGATIVE PRESSURE

In some cases, the characters can be subject to the effects of pressure, even in cases where they are out of the water. In other situations, especially when encountering a Polaris effect, they can be affected by a negative pressure. The effects of these phenomena on a living organism are as follows:

- **Normal people:** the damage inflicted is equal to 1D10 per round and per 100m of pressure. Moreover, if the pressure is removed too rapidly, the character will suffer the effects of decompression. If the pressure is removed instantaneously, the character will suffer double the damage inflicted by the pressure. As the damage is internal, no protections can guard against these effects.
- **Hybrids and divers using fluid:** these characters are immune to the damages caused by pressure down to their maximum diving level.
- **Neutral or negative pressure:** if the pressure is reduced (from a normal level), the effects will be those of a sudden rise of altitude. Instead of an increase in pressure, it causes a negative pressure of - (strength of the effect). From -1 to -10, the victims suffer from dizziness and nausea with a penalty for all their tests equal to the level of the negative pressure. At levels of -5 or more, there is also a risk of asphyxia. From levels of -11 or more, the effects will be dramatic, as the victims will start bleeding all over, as the balance between the inside pressure of their bodies and the atmosphere outside them is broken. All victims suffer 1D10 physical damage points located in the Body for every Round spent at -11, plus 1D10 per extra negative point, until the body explodes.

DISEASES AND POISONS

There are a multitude of diseases and poisons, all with very diverse effects. Technically, diseases and poisons are managed with the same rules, but for a few small details.

LEVEL OF DISEASE OR POISONING

The level of disease or poisoning represents the effects of these problems on the character. In a healthy individual, these levels are at 0, but if he falls ill or becomes the victim of poisoning, the level of disease or poisoning will grow—more or less quickly—representing the progression of the problem. In the manner of physical Wound thresholds, as soon as the level passes a certain threshold, the character suffers the corresponding effects of the disease. Here is the scale of levels for disease and poisoning (comparable to that of Wounds):

- Threshold 5: mildly ill or poisoned. The character is considered Mildly tired (penalty of -2 to actions).
- Threshold 10: moderately ill or poisoned. The character is Tired (penalty of -4).
- Threshold 15: gravely ill or poisoned. The character is Very tired (penalty of -6).
- Threshold 20: very gravely ill. The character is Exhausted (penalty of -8).
- Threshold 25: critical state. The character is Worn-out (penalty of -10).
- Threshold 30: final stage.

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The first effect common to all diseases and poisons is that they weaken the character ***Optional:*** If you use the advanced Fatigue rules (*CRB2* page 203), then this becomes a rise in the character's Fatigue level This confers a penalty on all actions, as long as the level of disease or poisoning does not decrease. This doesn't have to relate to a real state of fatigue; it may also be vertigo, pain, nausea, etc.

Note: if you do not use the advanced Fatigue rules, just apply the penalties.

Each disease or poison then has specific **effects** that get activated as soon as the corresponding level reaches or surpasses certain **thresholds** (not all thresholds have their own associated effects). Thus, if the first symptoms of a disease appear at threshold 5, the character will suffer the effects as soon as his level of disease reaches 5 or surpasses 5 points. The diseases and poisons can bring about a drop in the level of one or more Attributes. As a general rule, this loss is temporary; the character regains his usual levels after healing.

A character who possesses a level of disease or poisoning of 30 can no longer fight the ill effects. Moreover, he gains a new point of disease or poisoning every day, as long as his level does not drop below 30. In the case of mortal diseases or poisons, the character dies when the corresponding level reaches or surpasses 30.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A DISEASE OR A POISON

METHOD OF CONTAMINATION

This deals with the manner in which the disease propagates (by airborne transmission, skin contact with an infected person, germs left on objects, etc.), or the manner in which the poison must be administered to the victim to take effect (simple contact, ingestion, inhalation, injection, bite, etc.).

CONTAGION MODIFIER (DISEASES ONLY)

This modifier represents the ease with which a disease propagates (it is positive if the disease is benign and negative if it is very contagious). It applies to the contamination Test (see **Contracting a Disease**, page 241).

DETECTION MODIFIER(S) (POISONS ONLY)

Certain poisons have an odor, a taste, or a particular appearance, and may be detected, notably if they are mixed into a drink or food. These modifiers apply to the Success Probability for a character attempting to detect a toxic substance by taste, sight, or smell. See "Being the Victim of Poisoning," below.

INCUBATION PERIOD (DISEASES)OR ONSET DELAY (POISONS)

This is simply the time it takes for a disease to show up and develop the first symptoms, or the time it takes for a poison to act. An individual may incubate for several days without realizing he is diseased, while poisons have more immediate effects (if not instantly, it's rarely longer than several hours before symptoms begin).

VIRULENCE/PROGRESSION

This reflects the strength of a disease or a poison, which translates into an increase in the corresponding level. This increase is generally determined by the roll of a certain number of D6s. Diseases and poisonings also progress over the course of time as they develop or propagate in the character's body. This progression also increases the level of disease or poisoning at a progressive rate of strength and time, but appropriate medical treatment may check the illness. See **Progression of Diseases and Poisoning**, on page 242.

THRESHOLDS/EFFECTS

This reflects the harmful effects of the disease or poison, and the thresholds through which it manifests during the progression of the corresponding level.

DIAGNOSIS MODIFIER

This modifier applies to the Success Probability for a character who attempts to identify a disease or a poison through its symptoms or effects. This consists of a bonus if the disease or the toxic substance is well known, or a penalty if it is difficult to diagnose (or rare). See **Treatment of Diseases and Poison** hereafter.

HEALING MODIFIER

This modifier has an effect on the chances of healing the patient during the treatment of his illness. So the diseases that are difficult to heal, little known, or believed to be "incurable" give a very significant penalty to healing. See **Treatment of Diseases and Poisons** hereafter.

CONTRACTING A DISEASE

When a character is likely to be in contact with a disease through its **method of contamination**, he must make a contamination Test—this consists simply of a Constitution Test with a Difficulty equal to the **Contagion Modifier**. In the case of a Failure, the character contracts the disease. In the case of a Success, he does not fall ill. However, if he remains in contact with the disease for a longer time, the GM may reasonably demand new contamination Tests.

Note: it may be interesting to make these Tests secretly, so the Player doesn't suspect anything.

BEING THE VICTIM OF POISONING

The use of poisons is simpler, because there is no Test for contamination to make. Indeed, as soon as the poison is administered to a character through its **Method of Contamination,** the character is automatically poisoned.

However, a poison can be detected when it is placed in a drink, food, etc. The character must make a Test for *Pharmacology* or

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Knowledge of poisons, with a Difficulty equal to the appropriate detection Modifier (depending on the sense used). A character who is not competent in *Pharmacology* or in *Knowledge of poisons* can always make a Perception Test (always with the same Modifiers): in the case of a Success, they realize there is a strange taste or smell without being more precise. Finally, in the majority of cases, a chemical analysis conducted with *Pharmacology* or *Chemistry* will usually allow the detection of the toxic substance (without necessarily identifying it for sure).

PROGRESSION OF DISEASES AND POISONING

After contracting a disease or being poisoned, the character does not feel the effects at first, during the **incubation period** or the **onset delay**. The ailment then develops depending on its **virulence** and eventual **progressions:** the level of disease or poisoning increases the number of points indicated, then—as the case may be—progresses at a certain rate and over a certain amount of time, causing additional increases. For example, a disease can make itself known at the end of the incubation period by raising the level of disease by 2D6 points, then progress, causing 1D6 additional points of disease each week. Thus, in two weeks, the character will get 4D6 points of disease. After this possible evolution, a disease or a poison does not progress any further.

Note: here again, the GM may keep secret the progression of the disease or poisoning, and only describe to the Player the symptoms as it advances.

The secondary Attributes of Resistance to diseases and Resistance to poisons represent the resistance (or, in converse, the vulnerability) of the character's body in the face of pathogenic agents or toxic substances. They modify the point total of the disease/poison received **every time the disease or poisoning progresses**, from its initial appearance through each possible progression. So, in the example given above, the Resistance to diseases applies once against the 2D6 points of disease after its incubation, then again on each of the D6s rolled over the course of the next two weeks. If the character has a Resistance to diseases of -2, he gets 2D6-2 points of disease, then 2 x 1D6-2 points afterward.

POISON OVERDOSE

A dose of poison suffices to produce an effect on a normal individual. In the event of an overdose, however, the effects are aggravated; each supplementary dose of poison augments the damage from poisoning by 1D6 points.

TREATMENT OF DISEASES AND POISONS

To correctly treat a disease or a poisoning, the cause must first be recognized. The doctor must succeed at a Test of *Medicine*, with a Difficulty corresponding to the **diagnosis Modifier** of the disease or poison in question. For poisonings, the GM may add a bonus to the Test if the source or the toxic substance is identified. In the event of a Success, the doctor recognizes the symptoms and knows which remedies to employ (if the treatment is known). In the event of a Failure, he does not know how to treat the illness (the GM may give him permission to conduct further research on the medical databases or contact his colleagues to learn more, but during this time, the disease or the poison progresses). For a Catastrophe, the doctor may be mistaken in his diagnosis, and perform ineffective treatment without realizing it at first.

To treat a disease or a poisoning, there must be access to medications, a serum, or appropriate medical supplies (if not, no treatment is possible). As soon as the illness is diagnosed and the appropriate treatment begins, the patient may make a Constitution Test per disease or poisoning's stage of progression, then a Test each day when the illness has stabilized and progresses no further. The Difficulty of the Test is equal to the **healing Modifier** of the disease or poison, to which is added the Success Modifier obtained by the doctor with his diagnosis. In the event of a Success, the character's level of disease or poisoning drops by a number of points equal to his Success Modifier. In the event of a Failure, the level remains stable (for a Catastrophe, it can even increase by 1D6 points).

POISON ANTIDOTE PATCHES

Poisons generally progress faster than diseases, but they can be suppressed more easily with a poison antidote patch (or an antivenin serum). There are two types of patch:

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- Specific patches for a specific poison, toxin, or venom, which completely neutralize that one substance but remain ineffective against others.
- Universal patches, which can be used against any poison but only divide the number of poisoning points by two.

Poison antidote patches can be administered immediately and act quickly (within a few minutes). Take note that small stations and ships do not typically have this type of product at their disposal.

Without a correct diagnosis, and thus without appropriate treatment, the character may have to resort to natural healing. However, he suffers a supplementary penalty of -7 to his healing Modifier.

EXAMPLES OF DISEASES

Blue Influenza

More common than scarlet plague, blue influenza only spreads through direct or indirect contact between two individuals. It is rarely fatal.

Exposure Method: contact.

Contagion Modifier: +0 to -5, depending on the strength of the virus.

Incubation Period: 2 days.

Virulence/Progression: 2D6, then 1D6 every four days for 8 days

Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: migraines, mild fever, vomiting.
- Threshold 15: raging fever, vomiting, body aches; the skin turns light blue. Strength, Constitution, Coordination, and Willpower -3.
- Threshold 20: Strength, Constitution, Coordination, and Willpower -5.

Diagnosis Modifier: +3.

Healing Modifier: +0.

Scarlet Plague

This terrifying and thankfully rare disease can putrefy an organism. With its relatively slow incubation time, a carrier may very well contaminate several stations without knowing it.

Exposure Method: this disease spreads itself by all possible and imaginable vectors.

Contagion Modifier: +0 to -5, depending on the strength of the virus.

Incubation Period: 1D4 weeks.

Virulence/Progression: 3D6, then 1D6+3 per week for 3 weeks.

Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: itching, appearance of red splotches.
- Threshold 10: appearance of small red spots on the abdomen, throat, and crotch. These small spots do not itch at all and may pass unnoticed if a character, for some reason, does not wash himself completely. Very brief bouts of fever.
- Threshold 15: formation of scarlet boils, raging fever. Presence -3; Strength, Constitution, and Coordination -2.
- Threshold 20: Presence -5; Strength, Constitution, and Coordination -3.
- Threshold 25: the body is swollen and entirely covered with boils. The body begins to decompose. Presence -10; Strength, Constitution, and Coordination -5.

Diagnosis Modifier: +0.

Healing Modifier: -3.

EXAMPLES OF POISONS

Chyrso

This artificial poison slowly attacks a character's Strength. If the level of this Attribute falls to 3, the victim is incapable of standing up, and if it falls to 0, he falls into a coma. Each negative point permanently lowers the maximum that an individual can reach in this Attribute, because the poison irreparably destroys part of the body. If a character's Strength reaches a negative level that is equal to his normal level (Example, -6 for a Strength of 6), he dies.

Exposure Method: ingestion.

Detection Modifier: taste (+0), smell (+3).

Onset Delay: 1 day.

Virulence/Progression: 2D6, then 1D6 every day for 5 days.

Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: Strength -2.
- Threshold 10: Strength -4.
- Threshold 15: Strength -6.
- Threshold 20: Strength -8.
- Threshold 25: Strength -10.
- Threshold 30: Strength -12.

Diagnosis Modifier: +0.

Healing Modifier: +0.

Cost per Dose: 4,000.

Doom

This artificial poison is particularly virulent and difficult to detect.

Exposure Method: ingestion.

Detection Modifier: taste (-10), smell (-7).

Onset Delay: 1 hour.

Virulence/Progression: 2D6, then 1D6 every hour for 3 hours.

Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: nausea, vomiting.
- Threshold 10 and above: appearance of fever; the nausea becomes stronger and incapacitating. Starting with threshold 10 and for each subsequently passed threshold, the character loses 3 points of Constitution temporarily. If this Attribute falls to 0, the character dies.

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Diagnosis Modifier: +0.
Healing Modifier: +0.
Cost per Dose: 2,000.

Dream

This poison plunges its victims into unconsciousness. It is very unobtrusive and its effects will only be felt after several hours. Then the victim feels terribly tired.

Exposure Method: ingestion.
Detection Modifier: taste (+0), smell (-10).
Onset Delay: 2 hours.
Virulence/Progression: 2D6, then 1D6 every hour for 5 hours.
Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: vertigo and great fatigue; Optional: the penalties from Fatigue (*CRB2* page 203) are increased by 2 points.
- Threshold 10: as above. Moreover, in the event of inactivity, the victim must pass a Willpower Test or fall asleep.
- Threshold 15: as above, but with a penalty of -3.
- Threshold 20: as above, but with a penalty of -5.
- Threshold 25: as above, but with a penalty of -7.

Diagnosis Modifier: -3.
Healing Modifier: +7.
Cost per Dose: 1,000.

RECREATIONAL DRUGS

LEVELS AND EFFECTS OF DRUGS

Drugs function like diseases and poisons: each product inflicts a certain number of intoxication points, which are compared with the usual levels (5, 10, 15, etc.). The higher the level attained, the stronger the effects of the drug. A normal dose of a drug produces effects that are more or less expected, because they are expected to act at a certain threshold. Beyond that, there is a risk of overdose, which has consequences that are more or less harmful depending on the threshold reached. Note that each additional dose taken beyond the first increases the **Strength** of the drug by 1D6.

This section presents rules for players who ingest recreational drugs involuntarily, surreptitiously or by force.

Although the usage of drugs is disapproved by most people and condemned by the authorities, characters may involuntarily be subjected to the effects of substances used by a criminal or secreted by creatures. This is especially true for the most potent drugs, that no sane character would ever use of their own volition if they want to be able to keep adventuring.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DRUGS

Like diseases and poisons, drugs have **effects**, which start at certain **thresholds** of intoxication, **detection modifiers**, and an **onset delay** (generally very short). They also possess other characteristics:

STRENGTH

This is the number of intoxication points, in terms of D6, that the drug inflicts on a character. Typically, the character's Resistance to drugs will modify the number of intoxication points received.

DURATION

This is the drug's duration of effect. As soon as this has run out, the effects of the drug dissipate rapidly: the character then loses 5 intoxication points every hour.

WITHDRAWAL

This is the period after which the character begins to feel withdrawal, after the dissipation of the drug's effects. See **Addiction and Withdrawal Effects**, page 245.

ADDICTION MODIFIER

This modifier acts on the Withdrawal Resistance Test. See **Addiction and Withdrawal Effects**, page 245.

SIDE EFFECTS

These are the drug's harmful side effects, which become more frequent over time. See **Side Effects**, page 245.

NARCO-DAMAGE

Narco-damage represent the long-term effects of taking drugs on a character's body or mind. They can be measured by a level that grows more or less quickly depending on consumption. Narco-damage directly correlates with the phenomena of habituation and addiction, and facilitates the appearance of a drug's side effects. These rules apply for characters who were former addicts and suffer from these effects.

There are two ways to gain points in Narco-damage. First of all, **each time the character's intoxication level surpasses his current level of Narco-damage**, the Player must make a Constitution Test. In the event of a Failure, the character gains 1 point of Narco-damage. Next, the character automatically gains 1 point of Narco-damage each time his intoxication level reaches or surpasses 30.

The effects of the Narco-damage levels are as follows:

- 1 to 4 points of Narco-damage: Nothing noticeable. If he does not normally use drugs, the character's Narco-damage level drops by 1 point every day.
- 5 to 9 points of Narco-damage: Addiction (-2). If he does not normally use drugs, the character's Narco-damage level drops by 1 point every 2 days.
- 10 to 14 points of Narco-damage: Habituation (-1). If he does not normally use drugs, the character's Narco-damage level drops by 1 point every 3 days.

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- 15 to 19 points of Narco-damage: Addiction (-4), Habituation (-2). To lose Narco-damage points, the character must not take any drugs and follow a light detoxification treatment under the care of a doctor. The Narco-damage level will then drop by 1 point every week.
- 20 to 24 points of Narco-damage: Addiction (-6), Habituation (-3). To lose Narco-damage points, a rehab program in a specialized establishment is necessary. The character must, of course, absolutely not take drugs. The Narco-damage level will then drop by 1 point every two weeks.
- 25 to 29 points of Narco-damage: Addiction (-8), Habituation (-4). The character starts to be seriously affected by drugs, which have lasting physical and psychological impacts: for each point above 25, he temporarily loses 1 Attribute level, determined at random between Constitution (weakening and weight loss), Intelligence (increasing inability to reason), or Willpower (the character transforms little by little into a zombie). On top of that, he suffers a -3 penalty on all Tests. To lose Narco-damage points, hospitalization for detoxification followed by serious rehab treatment is necessary. The character must not take any drugs. The Narco-damage level will then drop by 1 point every three weeks (he recoups his lost Attribute levels at the same rate). Nevertheless, each time the character reaches this level, 1 point of Narco-damage will never be healed.
- 30+ points of Narco-damage: the character is ravaged by drugs. He suffers a -5 penalty on all his Tests. Moreover, each time the character reaches this level, he permanently loses 1 point from one of his Attributes (determined at random). To lose Narco-damage points, hospitalization for detoxification followed by an in-patient rehab treatment is necessary. The character must not take any drugs. The Narco-damage level will then drop by 1 point every month.

The effects of Habituation and Addiction are detailed in the following sections.

HABITUATION

Little by little, the body gets used to drugs. The character becomes resistant to anything but larger doses, or stronger products. The Habituation Modifier is added to the character's Resistance to drugs. These modifiers are not cumulative; it's only necessary to keep track of what happens at the Narco-damage level the character reaches. Thus, if a character with a Resistance to drugs of -2 reaches a Narco-damage level of 15, his new resistance modifier becomes -4.

ADDICTION AND WITHDRAWAL EFFECTS

The character starts to feel the effects of withdrawal at the end of the specified period. He must then succeed at a Test of Constitution or Willpower (the lower of the two), with a Difficulty equal to the Modifier for the addictiveness of the drug, which is made worse by the potential Addiction penalty that comes with the Narco-damage level.

- In the event of a Success, the character is able to overcome the effects of withdrawal.
- **In the case of a Failure,** the character has a withdrawal crisis. He suffers from nausea, vertigo, shaking, etc. The greater the Failure Margin, the more serious the crisis (to the point where the character feels compelled to get a fix by any means available). The character receives a penalty equal to the failure Modifier on all his Tests, until he takes his next dose. However, this penalty diminishes by 1 point a day.

The Test must be made again at the end of each withdrawal period, but the character gains a cumulative bonus of +2 each time. When he succeeds at three successive Tests, the weaning ends, and he no longer suffers withdrawal effects (until his next use of the drug).

SIDE EFFECTS

The majority of drugs have **side effects**, physical or psychological. When the character reaches an intoxication threshold that includes a risk of side effects, the Player must roll 1D20 and compare the result to his character's Narco-damage level: if he rolls below or equal to that number, the character suffers the drug's side effects. The greater the margin, the more severe the side effects. The character suffers the side effects for the entire effective duration of the drug.

EXAMPLES OF DRUGS

Kraken

This is the most common drug in slums. It is taken by the younger people who live on the margin of society. It produces a feeling of invincibility.

Detection Modifiers: taste (-5), sight (-3), smell (+0).
Onset Delay: immediate.
Strength: 2D6.
Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: bonus of +1 on Tests related to Constitution, Strength, Coordination, and Willpower (this also works for all Skills that have one of these two Attributes as a linked Attribute).
- Threshold 10 (side effects): the bonus increases to +2; the character ignores the penalties from wounds. Optional: ignores penalties from Fatigue as well (*CRB2* page 203).
- Threshold 15 (overdose): nausea, vomiting (-4 penalty on all Tests). Poisoning.
- Threshold 20 (overdose): dizziness. Poisoning +1D6.
- Threshold 25 (overdose): loss of consciousness. Poisoning +2D6.

Duration: 2 hours.

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Side Effects (threshold 10): the side effects of this drug cause numerous behavioral disorders, with a tendency toward totally irrational acts.

- Margin of 1 to 9: significant nervousness.
- Margin of 10 to 14: the character becomes more and more agitated; he stammers when speaking and his gestures are more jerky.
- Margin of 15 or more: the character is hyperactive; he reacts immediately to everything that happens around him, with the first action that comes to mind, without considering consequences.

Withdrawal: 1 day.
Addiction Modifiers: -5.
Cost per Dose: 100.

Neurotropic Algae

This drug stimulates an individual's intellectual and intuitive faculties. The prepared organism is consumed by many young researchers or by people in high-pressure jobs.

Detection Modifiers: taste (-7), sight (-5), smell (-7).
Onset Delay: immediate.
Strength : 2D6.
Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: +2 bonus on Tests related to Intelligence or Adaptation (this also works for all Skills that have one of these two Attributes as a linked Attribute).
- Threshold 10 (side effects): the bonus increases to +3.
- Threshold 15 (overdose): headaches, difficulty concentrating (penalty of -4 on all Tests). Poisoning +1D6.
- **Threshold 20 (overdose):** loss of consciousness. Poisoning +2D6.

Duration: 8 hours.
Side Effects (threshold 10): the side effects of this drug are difficulty with reasoning and a complete loss of emotions.

- Margin of 1 to 9: foggy mind; the character cannot continue his work.
- Margin of 10 to 14: erroneous reasoning, -5 penalty on all Tests related to Intelligence.
- Margin of 15 or more: loss of emotions, sadistic urges. The character must make Willpower Tests to control himself each time he is under pressure.

Withdrawal: 30 days.
Addiction Modifiers: -5.
Cost per Dose: 2,000.

Psychoplankton

This widespread drug makes the effects of fatigue disappear and allows the user to see the world through rose-colored glasses, even at 20,000 meters deep.

Detection Modifiers: taste (-7), sight (-3), smell (-10).
Onset Delay: immediate.
Strength: 2D6.
Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: +2 bonus on Endurance Tests.
- Threshold 10 (side effects): +4 bonus on Endurance Tests. Optional: The penalties caused by Fatigue are divided by two (*CRB2* page 203).
- Threshold 15 (overdose): headaches, nose bleeds, dizziness (-3 penalty on all Tests). Poisoning +1D6.
- Threshold 20 (overdose): loss of consciousness. Poisoning +2D6.

Duration: 10 hours.
Side Effects (threshold 10): the side effects make the subject impatient and irritable.

- Margin of 1 to 9: high sensitivity.
- Margin of 10 to 14: paranoia.
- Margin of 15 or more: acute paranoia. The character must make Willpower Tests to control himself each time he is under pressure.

Withdrawal: 7 days.

Vulcan Weed

This drug creates a sense of well-being.

Detection Modifiers: taste (-7), sight (-10), smell (-5).
Onset Delay: immediate.
Strength: 3D6.
Thresholds/Effects:

- Threshold 5: +2 bonus on Tests related to Strength and Willpower (this also works for all Skills that have one of these two Attributes as a linked Attribute).
- Threshold 10 (side effects): in addition to the above bonus, the character ignores the penalties from Wounds and Fatigue (*CRB2* 203).
- Threshold 15 (overdose): shaking, nausea (penalty of -4 on all Tests). Poisoning +1D6.
- Threshold 20 (overdose): loss of consciousness. Poisoning +1D6.

Duration: 6 hours.
Side Effects (threshold 10): the side effects of this drug cause hallucinations and behavioral disorders.

- Margin of 1 to 9: hallucinations; the character sees things and talks to people who do not exist.
- Margin of 10 to 14: the hallucinations become terrifying, and the character becomes susceptible to claustrophobia.
- Margin of 15 or more: the character lives in an imaginary world populated with horrible hallucinations. His attacks of claustrophobia become extremely serious, forcing him to succeed at Willpower Tests to control himself, in order to, for example, avoid removing diving armor or opening an airlock underwater.

Withdrawal: 3 days.
Addiction Modifiers: -7.
Cost per Dose: 2,000.

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IRRADIATION

LEVELS AND EFFECTS OF RADIATION

Like all diseases and poisons, radiation is progressive and exposure raises a character's irradiation level. Each threshold carries its own set of problems:

- Threshold 5: light irradiation. The character temporarily loses 2 points of Constitution, until his irradiation level is reduced below this threshold. He suffers nausea from time to time.
- Threshold 10: medium irradiation. As above, but the loss is 3 points. Moreover, the character is considered Mildly tired (-2 penalty on all actions), and he consistently suffers from nausea, headaches, diarrhea, and vomiting. Red splotches are visible on his skin.
- Threshold 15: heavy irradiation. As above, but the loss is 5 points. The character is Tired (-4 penalty), and he suffers from the same symptoms as the previous threshold, but they occur more frequently.
- Threshold 20: very heavy irradiation. As above, but the loss is 7 points and his normal level of Constitution is permanently reduced by 1 point. The character is Very tired (-6 penalty), and he suffers extremely severe symptoms (hair loss, ulcerated skin, digestion problems and dehydration, respiratory problems, bleeding when coughing, etc.).
- Threshold 25: critical irradiation. As above, but the loss is 10 points, and his normal level of Constitution is permanently reduced by 2 points. The character is Exhausted (-8 penalty); the symptoms reach a degree of critical severity (skin necrosis, internal hemorrhaging, etc.), requiring constant medical attention.
- Threshold 30: deadly irradiation. The character suffers from a temporary loss of 10 Constitution points. Beyond this threshold, the character is critically burned by the radiation and his life-threatening symptoms develop rapidly—every two days, his normal Constitution level is reduced by 1 point.

Take note that the temporary losses of Constitution are not cumulative: the character suffers only the loss that corresponds to the level reached. If the temporary losses force the Constitution level below 3 points, the character falls unconscious. If the permanent losses bring the Constitution level below 3 points, the character dies.

The radiation has another negative effect: it accumulates in the body. So, each time one of the preceding thresholds is attained, the character suffers 1 point of permanent irradiation that can never be healed.

DAMAGE FROM RADIATION

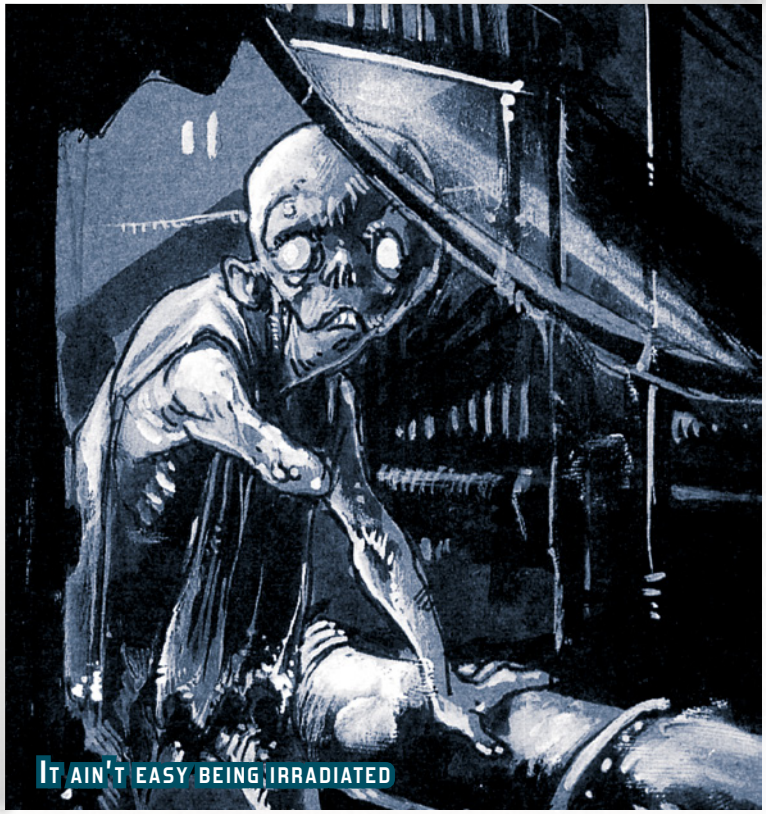
The gain of irradiation points depends foremost on the strength of the source:

- 1D6: light radiation (for example, from a mild radiation leakage).
- 2D6: significant radiation (for example, from an incident in a laboratory or a nuclear power station).
- 3D6: massive radiation (atomic bomb or nuclear reactor explosion).

Irradiation is then aggravated by the exposure time: a character who stays in an irradiated zone suffers base damage every month for a source of light radiation, every week for a source of significant radiation, and every day for a source of massive radiation.

TREATING IRRADIATION

The irradiation level does not decrease as long as the character remains untreated. The treatment can only be administered in a specialized hospital (that is to say, the type of establishment that can only be found in large cities). The character recovers 1 irradiation level every 3 days. He also recoups the Constitution points that were temporarily lost. On the other hand, permanent irradiation points can never be healed, nor can the permanent losses of Constitution. An irradiated character beyond level 30 is usually doomed; all that treatments can do is to slow down the permanent loss of Constitution points.



It ain't easy being irradiated

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CHAPTER 3.4

POLARIS EFFECT

"The mastery of the Polaris Effect is one of the strangest powers there is. Some think the ability to control the Polaris Effect is due to a mutation, but nothing is less certain. Its nature remains a complete mystery. Recent works suggest that those who are gifted with this power are able to get in touch with some sort of energy flux (similar to the fluxes that can be found in the oceans), some sort of psychic dimension. Some priests go as far as envisioning the existence of living creatures in that dimension. Contrary to what was thought before, the Polaris powers are not triggered by the brain of an individual but by their whole body..."

—Anton Sakharos, scientist from the Mediterranean Union

The Polaris Effect lives inside all things and seems to act consciously in certain circumstances. Its manipulation is still in its infancy. The most frequent phenomena in human beings are described below, but the works of the priests of the Trident have proved for a long time that this is only a fragment of the full Polaris potential. As for marine mammals, they seem to know a little more but that's a secret they are jealously guarding...

MASTERING THE POLARIS EFFECT

The Polaris Effect is very difficult to control and the greatest danger is its involuntary release. Even if an individual succeeds in willfully triggering it, directing the power it releases is particularly hard. The first Skill to develop for an individual gifted with this talent is the *Mastery of the Polaris Effect*. He will then be able to try to control different applications, the Polaris powers, each one of them corresponding to a separate Skill.

The use of the Polaris Effect can be voluntarily achieved. Of course, the character must know the power in question (Mastery Level -3 or above). Technically, use of the Polaris Effect is achieved in two steps: first the character releases the Polaris energy that is inside him, then he shapes it to give it a specific form that defines the power's effect.

RELEASING AND CONTROLLING THE POLARIS EFFECT

In terms of game play, you must first perform a *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test to know if the character can succeed in releasing the Polaris Effect while maintaining its control:

- On a Success, the character releases the Effect and maintains control . He may then shape the Polaris Effect to use a specific power (see "Using a Polaris Power"

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below). The Success Margin is then used to reduce the time required to activate this power (see details below) and to limit the effects of the Shock (see Polaris Shock, page 249).

- On a Failure, the Polaris Effect is poorly controlled, which may lead to consequences of varying severity. The Player must immediately roll (with no modifier) on the Polaris Incidents list to determine what is happening (see Polaris Incidents, page 250).

Releasing the Polaris Effect is an exclusive Action, which requires a full Combat Round during which the character can do nothing apart from concentrate. What then remains is shaping this raw energy to create the effects of the power the Player wants to launch. **Activating a power requires three Combat Rounds;** it is a complex Action during which the character must stay focused. If the character is distracted, he must succeed at a Willpower Test to remain focused, or else the Polaris Effect release or the activation of the power fails (without any other consequences). In most cases, suffering a Wound breaks the character's concentration.

It is, however, possible to reduce the power's activation time thanks to the Success Margin obtained on the *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test; each point of the Success Modifier makes it possible to reduce the required time by a Combat Round. That means a 5-point Success Margin (Modifier +/-2) will save 2 Combat Rounds (so in the end, the character will only need 1 Round to activate his power). If the necessary time goes down to 0 Combat Rounds, the power may be activated in the Round following the release of the Polaris Effect, at the character's usual Initiative.

USING A POLARIS POWER

To use a power of the Polaris Effect, you must perform a Test with the Skill corresponding to the power used:

- On a Success, the power is triggered and produces the expected effects. The Success Margin allows you to increase the effects of the power. See "Powers of the Polaris Effect" below.
- On a Failure, the power is not triggered (and nothing further happens). The character successfully controlled the Polaris Effect, but failed to give it a shape. It is up to the GM to decide if this energy discreetly fades away or if there are some visible aftereffects (the crackling of static electricity, the smell of ozone, a buzzing in the air, etc.).

POLARIS SHOCK

Using the Polaris Effect is quite demanding on the body. After each release of the Polaris Effect, whether it is voluntarily or not (see **Involuntary Release** below), the character must succeed at a Shock Test. This Test takes place after the attempt to use the power or after the attempt to control the involuntary release. The Success Modifier points obtained at the end of the *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test—and that have not been used to reduce the power's activation time—are added to the Shock Test. In the case of a Failure, the user risks being *stunned* for 1D6 Round(s) or falling *unconscious* for 1D6 minute(s). Some elements may have an effect on the Shock Test (an uncontrolled power or a Polaris Incident, notably). See the details in the following sections.

UNCONTROLLED POWER

As you have seen above, activating a power requires a character to release the Polaris Effect and to control it (*Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test), and then to shape it to create a specific effect (Power Skill Test). This all may take a little time, usually from 1 to 4 Combat Rounds, depending on the Success Margin obtained. It is, however, possible to act much faster, by unleashing the Polaris Effect without really trying to control it. In terms of game play, the Player does not perform a *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test, but he directly performs a Test of the Skill associated with the activated power.

The only advantage of this method is its speed: the power is instantly activated and can therefore be triggered every time the character has the Initiative. However, there are risks:

- The Shock Test suffers a -5 penalty (whether the power is activated or not).
- A Failure on the Skill Test requires a roll on the Polaris Incidents list. Moreover, the risk of a truly dramatic event happening is increased. Indeed, the result of the Polaris Incident roll must be increased by 10 points (20 points in the case of a Catastrophe).

Note: some characters have no choice and can only activate uncontrolled powers. Most of the time they are individuals gifted with a latent and uncontrolled connection to the Polaris Effect (see *CRB2* page 173); they can activate one of the Polaris powers but are unable to control the energy of the Polaris Effect (until they can develop the *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Skill).

INVOLUNTARY RELEASE

The Polaris Effect can be involuntarily unleashed due to stress, fear, pain, or other psychological factors (like being exposed to a phobia, for example). If the GM thinks a physical or psychological trauma suffered by a character is violent enough to make an uncontrolled release of the Polaris Effect possible (***Optional:*** it is also possible to use the Morale rules in *CRB2* page 197), the character must perform a *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test. In the case of a Failure, there is an involuntary release: you must roll on the Polaris Incidents list. To avoid this kind of incident, those who possess this gift often carry inhibitor devices that give a bonus to the *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test. The exact effects of a power that has been accidentally released are determined by the character's Failure Margin.

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POLARIS INCIDENTS

A "Polaris Incident" is the consequence of an involuntary or poorly controlled release of the Polaris Effect. If that happens, the Player must roll 1D100 on the following list. The higher the number obtained, the more devastating the effects will be.

- **01–03. Temperature change:** the temperature increases or decreases by 10 °C for 1D6 Combat Rounds.
- **04–06. Minor gravitational change:** the local gravity is slightly altered. People feel heavier or lighter, and the lightest objects float (e.g. a feather) or are slightly crushed (e.g. a plastic cup). Every character suffers a -3 penalty on their Actions for 1D6 Combat Rounds.
- **07–09. Minor pressure change:** pressure is slightly increased or decreased for 1D6 Combat Rounds. Every character—except Hybrids, amphibious mutants, and individuals in diving armor—must perform a successful Willpower Test or be disturbed by the phenomenon (-3 on all Actions for 3 Combat Rounds).
- **10–12. Noises:** mysterious noises ring out all around the character for 1D6 Rounds, interfering with communication and listening.
- **13–15. Itching:** people feel a sudden itch (-3 penalty on all Actions for 1D6 Rounds).
- **16–18. Minor structural damage:** any structure near or around the characters suffers some damage (pipes start leaking, walls crack, window panes explode, a few internal elements become more fragile, etc.). They will have to be fixed so that the problem does not get worse.
- **19–21. Flashes of light:** the brightness of the light mysteriously increases.
- **22–24. Minor shock wave:** a shock wave of low intensity runs through the atmosphere, inflicting 1D10 damage to the characters.
- **25–27. Minor outages:** devices of no importance start breaking down; firearms are temporarily jammed (1D6 Combat Rounds).
- **28–30. Minor disruption of reality:** reality is very slightly altered. Straight lines are not entirely straight anymore, curves are sharper, distances are slightly altered (which brings a -5 penalty on all Actions).
- **31–33. Decay:** food and water start rotting.
- **34–36. Bleeding:** the nose, ears, or eyes of the character and the people around him start bleeding (a disturbing and worrying effect that causes a -3 penalty on all Actions for 3 Combat Rounds).
- **37–39. Wind gust:** an icy gust of wind runs through the whole area (powerful enough to inflict a -3 penalty on all Actions for 1D4 Combat Rounds).
- **40–42. Minor structural quake:** the structure slightly vibrates as if going through a slight earthquake.
- **43–45. Minor Polaris shock:** the character who released the Polaris Effect suffers a -5 penalty on his Shock Test.
- **46–48. Electrical activity:** small electrical arcs run over the metallic walls, inflicting 1D10 damage to all characters present.
- **49–51. Dizziness:** the character who released the Polaris Effect experiences vertigo and cannot act for 1 Combat Round.
- **52–54. Tremors:** the character who released the Polaris Effect has slight tremors (-3 penalty on all his Actions for 1D6 Combat Rounds).
- **55–56. Major temperature change:** the temperature increases or decreases by 20 °C for 1D4 Combat Rounds.
- **57–58. Major gravitational change:** the gravity dramatically increases or decreases. Characters suffer a -5 penalty on their Actions and their moving speed is divided by two. Around them, objects start flying or are crushed.
- **59–60. Major pressure change:** the pressure increases or decreases dramatically for 1D4 Combat Rounds. All characters—except Hybrids, amphibious mutants, and individuals in diving armor—suffer a -5 penalty on their Actions, as well as 2D10 physical damage (located in the Body) from injury caused by the pressure on their internal organs.
- **61–62. Disorientation:** the character who released the Polaris Effect is completely disoriented and cannot act for 1D4 Combat Rounds.
- **64–65. Deafening noise:** deafening noises ring out in the area, preventing any communication for 1D6 Combat Rounds.
- **66–67. Electrical discharge:** electricity is running through every metal surface in the area. Anybody who is standing on them and who is not insulated suffers 2D10 physical damage.
- **68–69. Wounds:** the character who released the Polaris Effect suffers 2D10 physical damage. Those around him suffer the "34–36. Bleeding" effect.
- **70–71. Blinding light:** a blinding light floods the area, inflicting a -5 penalty on any Action requiring the sense of sight.
- **72–73. Major Polaris shock:** the character who released the Polaris Effect suffers a -10 penalty on his Shock Test.
- **74–75. Shrieking noise:** a shrieking noise shatters all fragile objects (glasses, dials, etc.). All living beings in the area can do nothing but cover their ears for 1 Combat Round.
- **76–77. Uncontrollable tremors:** the character who released the Polaris Effect is seized by violent tremors (-5 Penalty on all his Actions).
- **78–79. Major outages:** important devices break down. Firearms jam and must be repaired with a successful Intelligence Test.
- **80–81. Major shock wave:** a major shock wave runs through the atmosphere, inflicting 2D10 damage to the characters.
- **82–83. Major disruption of reality:** reality is altered. Straight lines are not straight anymore, curves are sharper, distances are altered (which inflicts a -7 penalty on all the Actions for 1D6 Combat Rounds).

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ACCIDENTAL POWERS RELEASE TABLE

Roll 1D100:	
01-02	Blob of Destruction
03–04	Change in Mass
05–06	Change in Pressure
07-08	Change in Temperature
09–11	Crossing
12–13	Deadly Whirpool
14–15	Disintegration
16–18	Disruption of Reality
19–21	Electromagnetic Pulse
22–24	Energy Bolts
25-26	Energy Drain
27–29	Flux Beast
30–31	Force Barrier
32–33	Force Field
34–35	Gravity Sphere
36–37	Jamming
38–39	Lightning
40–42	Mental Imprisonment
43–44	Mind Control
45–46	Molecular Barrier
47–48	Molecular Disruption
49–50	Molecular Field
51–52	Molecular Healing
53–55	Molecular Regeneration
56–57	Nightmare
58–59	Organic Repulsion Sphere
60–61	Pacification/Enragement
62–63	Premonitions
64–65	Psychic Attack
66–67	Psychic Barrier
68–70	Psychic Bolts
71–72	Psychic Dagger
73–74	Psychic Field
75–76	Psychic Healing
77–78	Psychic Sensitivity
79–80	Psychic Shock Waves
81–82	Shock Waves
83–84	Soul Eater
85–86	Soundscan
87–88	Telekinesis
89–90	Teleportation
91–92	Temporal Shift
93–94	Temporal Sphere
95–96	Terror Sphere
97–98	Whirlpool
99–100	Reroll 1D100 twice to determine two simultaneous effects (ignore this result).

- **84–85. Major structural damage:** the structure where the characters are located suffers major damage (pipes explode, walls shatter or warp, a few internal elements are destroyed, etc.). These will have to be fixed as soon as possible otherwise the structure itself is in danger of collapse.
- **86–87. Major wind gust:** a strong wind blows through the whole area, inflicting a -5 penalty on Actions for 1D6 Combat Rounds. Light objects fly around the area.
- **88–89. Seizure:** the character who released the Polaris Effect suffers a violent seizure (1d10 Penalty on all his Actions).
- **90–99. Accidental power release:** a Polaris Effect power randomly goes off. Roll on the Accidental Release Table (see below). The power indiscriminately hits allies and enemies and its "Success Modifier" is equal to the character's Failure Modifier (the Failure Modifier increases the effects of each power parameter, such as Area of Effect, Damage, etc).
- **100 or higher. Release of a unique phenomenon:** The character's failure causes the appearance of an extremely odd and dangerous phenomenon (in the same conditions as for the "90–99. Accidental power release"). Roll 1D10 to determine its nature:
  - **1.** Flux tear
  - **2.** Molecular breakdown
  - **3.** Psychic obliteration
  - **4–7.** Polaris wave
  - **8.** Flux storm
  - **9.** Psychic vortex
  - **10.** Physical vortex

POWERS OF THE POLARIS EFFECT

Each power has a corresponding Skill whose Base Level (that starts at "X") is calculated from the character's Intelligence and Willpower.

As a general rule, the character never has complete control of the phenomenon he releases, but the Success Modifier obtained from the Skill Test allows him to modify the power's parameters (Area of Effect, Damage, etc.). For example, with a power that has an Area of Effect of "5 meters +/- Success Modifier," a character who has obtained a Success Modifier of 3 can increase the Area of Effect up to 5 + 3 = 8 meters, or contrarily reduce it by 5 - 3 = 2 meters. The character can thus modify each one of the power parameters (note that he may choose to only use a part of the Modifier; a character who obtains a Modifier can modify a parameter by 1, 2, or 3 points, or even modify nothing at all).

DISCOVER AND LEARN NEW POWERS

Contrary to other Skills, the Polaris Effect powers are often jealously guarded techniques that are not learned from books. To develop a new power, you have to be taught by a teacher, which can prove difficult if the character does not

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belong to an organization such as the Cult of the Trident. It may be possible to discover a new power on your own, by relentlessly experimenting and training, but this will not be achieved without effort or collateral damage because of the many accidental releases. There are no real established rules for one method or the other. Everything relies on the goodwill of the Gamemaster; only she can allow a character to develop new powers more or less easily. This can also lead to interesting storylines.

Blob of Destruction

Maximum distance of the creature's appearance:
5 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Size of the creature:
1 m² +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This appalling power allows the user to create a tear in reality and release a dark gelatinous blob that destroys anything that is living. If the PC controls the power, he can give orders to the creature as long as the effect lasts. The blob of destruction is indestructible and always moves at a speed of 1 meter per Combat Round. Everything that stands in its path suffers 3D10 physical damage points on a Location randomly determined on the Ranged Attacks Location Table, page 228. If the victim does not move, the gelatinous blob will hit an extra Location each Combat Round. The Wounds it inflicts are permanent (see Molecular Breakdown). The size of the creature depends on the Success Margin.

If the PC does not control this power, the creature appears 1D10 meters away and attacks anything that moves while the effect lasts.

Change in Mass

Intensity of the phenomenon:
Success Margin of the Test (or Failure Margin in the case of an accidental release).
Range:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power allows the user to increase or decrease the mass of an individual or object. The weight of the target can be modified by a maximum value equal to (the intensity of the phenomenon) x 10 kg. The target does not change physically and keeps the same size.

In the case of a mass increase, the GM is free to reduce the character's movement, depending on the extra weight. If the intensity of the phenomenon is higher than his Strength, the victim is pinned to the ground by his own weight and cannot move. In addition, he must perform a Shock Resistance Test every Combat Round with a penalty equal to the difference between his Strength and the intensity of the effect. If the victim loses consciousness, he suffers physical damage (located in the the Body) equal to 1D10 plus the difference between his Strength and the intensity of the effect each Combat Round, due to the crushing of living tissues.

If the mass is reduced, the GM is free to increase the target's movement capacity. Note that if his weight goes down to 0, the character can float.

If the power is not controlled, everything that is located in a sphere, the diameter of which is equal to the range, around the character will have its mass decreased or increased by the intensity of the phenomenon. Each Combat Round, for the duration of the effect, the GM rolls 1D10. The mass is increased on an even result, and decreased on an odd one. The character who released the phenomenon also suffers from its effects.

Change in Pressure

Intensity of the phenomenon:
5 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
10 meters in diameter +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).
Range:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

The pressure is increased or decreased by the equivalent of 100 meters' depth for each point the phenomenon's intensity, in a spherical Area of Effect.

If the power is not controlled, everything that is located within a sphere around the character suffers the effects of the pressure. Each Round, for the entire duration of the effect, the GM rolls 1D10. The pressure is increased on an even result, and decreased on an odd one. The character who released the phenomenon also suffers from its effects.

For the effects on living organisms, see **Other sources of physical damage** on page 238.

Change in Temperature

Intensity of the phenomenon:
Success Margin of the Test (or Failure Margin in case of an accidental release).
Area of Effect:
10 meters in diameter +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).
Range:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

The temperature is increased or decreased by 2 °C for each point of power intensity within the spherical Area of Effect.

If the power is not controlled, everything that is located in a sphere around the character suffers the effects of the temperature change. Each Round, for the entire duration of

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The power of the Black Sun

the effect, the GM rolls 1D10. The temperature is increased on an even result, and decreased on an odd one. The character who released the phenomenon also suffers its effects.

Crossing

Duration:

5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a crack between our world and that of the Polaris Flux. It is possible to pass through this crossing to move from one point on the globe to another instantly. The crossing stays open both ways for the duration of the effect and accepts living beings the size of humans. If the power is controlled, the character chooses his destination (he needs to have been to this location before).

Using a crossing, an individual travels through the Flux to go from one point to another, but this entails certain dangers. First of all, when a crossing opens, there is always a risk that it allows a creature from the Flux to enter our world. On each turn, the GM rolls 1D10. If she gets a 1, a creature appears. Then roll 2D10 on the following table:

2–15	Flux beast.
16–17	Soul eater.
18–19	Blob of destruction.
20	Entity (see **The Polaris Flux**, page 265).

The creature will have a power equal to 2D10 and will stay for 1D10 Combat Rounds.

Finally, each character who uses the crossing can physically get lost in the Flux. You have to perform a Willpower Test to avoid doing so. If the power is controlled, the user receives a bonus on this Test equal to his Success Modifier. Any individual failing this Willpower Test loses his way in the Flux. You must then roll 2D10 to know what is happening to him:

2–11	Reappears where the crossing opened 1D10 minutes later.
12–15	Possessed.
16–17	Made prisoner by The Other (see Premonitions).
18–19	Reappears somewhere else in the world.
20	Lost forever (he may be retrieved by a character deliberately diving into the Flux).

A possessed character reappears as if nothing has happened (1–5 on 1D10) or 1D100 minutes later (6–10 on 1d10). Any individual using a crossing can voluntarily choose to physically dive into the Polaris Flux. Possession, diving into the Flux, and retrieving a character lost in the Flux, are detailed in section **The Polaris Flux**, page 265.

If the power is not controlled, the destination is completely unknown (note that you need only avoid rushing into the crossing to avoid taking risks).

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Deadly Whirlpool

Physical Damage:
2D10 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Movement:
5 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a moving whirlpool of crackling black energy. Everything that comes into contact with this phenomenon will suffer Physical Damage. There are no armor types that can protect against this effect.

If the effect is not under the user's control, its direction is randomly determined by rolling 1D10 (1–2: doesn't move, 3: east, 4: west, 5: north, 6: south, 7: northeast, 8: southeast, 9: southwest, 10: northwest).

Disruption of Reality

Penalty to actions:
-1 - Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.
Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

Reality seems distorted under the effect of this disruption. Distances can no longer be estimated, senses are disturbed, etc. For the whole duration of the power, every Action performed in the spherical Area of Effect suffers a penalty.

Disintegration

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power allows a character to temporarily disintegrate matter. Within the Area of Effect, the character can disintegrate living beings whose Constitution attribute is lower than or equal to the intensity of the phenomenon, or inanimate objects whose weight is less than or equal to five times the intensity of the phenomenon. A disintegrated object is initially still visible, but it is no longer in a solid state. The matter has become immaterial. It is therefore possible to pass through any obstacle (except energy fields). No attack can harm it, except energy weapons. An immaterial creature can fly. A matter Reintegrator (a Genetician device) makes it possible to instantly reintegrate. Alternatively, a character can try to use this power in his turn to automatically reverse the process.

If the power is not controlled, everything that is located in the effect sphere (whatever its size or volume) is disintegrated (including the character releasing the effect). Living creatures must perform a successful Willpower Test opposed to the intensity of the phenomenon to retain their integrity. Each victim is entitled to a Test every Combat Round until the end of the duration of the effect, until he is successful. If he fails all of his Tests, he is entitled to a final Luck Test, otherwise his molecular integrity starts breaking apart. He is then truly disintegrated. For equipment (robots, machines, and drones as well) the reintegration is automatically achieved after 1D6 minutes.

Energy Bolts

Number of energy bolts:
1 + Success Modifier.
Damage:
2D10, +2 points per additional bolt. It is possible to spread the energy bolts in order to attack several opponents at once.
Range:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a number of energy bolts that inflict physical damage. If the power is controlled, the PC chooses his targets as long as he can see them. The attack Test is performed with the *Energy bolts* Skill. Armors and protections are usually effective against this power.

If the power is not controlled, the bolts randomly strike at 1D4 target(s) each Combat Round. An attack Test must be performed with a Skill Level of 10 + Success Modifier.

Electromagnetic Pulse

EMP Attack:
the penalty on the Breakdown Test is equal to the Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
100 meters in diameter +/- (100 m x Success Modifier).
Range:
100 meters +/- (100 m x Success Modifier).

This power allows the user to unleash an electromagnetic wave through the Area of Effect. A Breakdown Test must be carried out for all electronic devices in the area (see the chapter on **Gear** in *CRB2*, page 8).

Energy Drain

Area of Effect:
15 meters in diameter +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).
Max. Range from center of Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.

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Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power cancels out any energy inside the Area of Effect for the duration of the phenomenon.

Flux Beast

Maximum distance of the creature's appearance:
5 meters +/- Success Modifier.

Intensity of the creature:
12 +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This terrifying power allows the creation of a crossing between our world and the dimension of the Polaris Flux (for some, it only allows the materialization of an individual's imagination). There is a large variety of Flux beasts, but they all have a demonic appearance. These creatures have one unique characteristic (unless the GM decides to use a more detailed Flux creature): the Intensity. All their Attributes and Skills are equal to their Intensity. They will inflict 2D10 damage points added to their Hand-to-hand Damage Modifier. The character who controls this power can give orders to the creature.

If the power is not controlled, the creature appears 1D10 meters away and attacks anything that moves.

Flux Storm

Physical Damage:
2D10 +/- Success Modifier.

Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).

Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

A Flux Storm is, generally speaking, a sign of a disaster. This power creates terrible disturbances in the Flux that are materialized in reality by a maelstrom, whether it is in the open air or underwater. The maelstrom stretches out around the character who is releasing the effect over a radius determined by the intensity of the phenomenon. The character is protected from this (even if he is not in control of his power) as are all those who are within one meter of him. The effect begins with a whirl of dark vapors that begins spinning around the character; then lightning bolts begin to hit everything within the Area of Effect. Each potential target must pass a Luck Test each Combat Round. If the Test is a Failure, he is directly hit by a lightning bolt and suffers Physical Damage. Furthermore, the lightning bolt inflicts damage on anything that is near to the point of impact. The damage is reduced by 2 points per meter from the impact.

Flux Tear

Intensity of the phenomenon:
15 +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:
2D6 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

Max. range:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.

A Flux tear causes a crack in reality and opens a crossing to the universe of the Polaris Flux. The problem is that, even when the tear is controlled, you can never know what will come out of it. The tear power's intensity is used for whatever effect is released. When a Flux tear happens, you must roll 2D10:

2–8	**Flux Beast** (see the description of the effect; if the power is controlled, the character can give orders to the creature).
9–10	**Polaris Wave** (see the description of the effect).
11–16	**Crossing** (see the description of the effect).
17	**Flux Storm** (see the description of the effect).
18	**Physical Vortex** (see the description of the effect).
19	**Psychic Vortex** (see the description of the effect).
20	**Two simultaneous effects.**

If the power is not controlled, the tear happens within a 1D100-meter radius around the character.

Force Barrier

Protection:
5 +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

Area of Effect:
5 m² +/- Success Modifier.

Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
10 meters +/- Success Modifier.

This effect creates a force barrier capable of absorbing a certain amount of damage. The character who controls the phenomenon can choose to place the barrier wherever he sees fit, within the range limit of his power.

If the power is not controlled, the barrier can appear anywhere (roll on the chart for Grenade Shooting Errors, page 231), 1D10 meters away from the user. If it appears on an individual, he is forced outside the Area of Effect. However, if it appears in a structure, even in part, the barrier can cause structural damage.

Note: a character wearing an armor will be pushed back, whereas a drone, a vehicle, or a robot will suffer (1D10 + level of protection) damage points.

Force Field

Protection:
5 +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

This effect surrounds a character and everything that is around him with a spherical force field capable of absorbing

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a certain amount of damage. The protection sphere moves with the character.

Gravity Sphere

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
15 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a Gravity Sphere around the character who uses it that will attract everything inside the Area of Effect toward him. Any objects with a weight equal to or less than the attraction (intensity of the phenomenon x 10 kg) will be brought closer to the character. Living beings can resist the attraction force by successfully passing a Strength Test opposed to the intensity of the phenomenon. If they succeed, they can move away a maximum distance equal to their Success Modifier in meters. The Test must be carried out for each Combat Round. As for objects, the speed at which they are attracted is equal to the difference between the object's weight and the intensity of the phenomenon (in multiples of 10 kg) in meters per Round. Any person who finds themselves in the way of an attracted object risks being affected by 1D10 to 3D10 Physical Damage Points depending on the weight and the speed of the object (a Coordination Test can allow the person to avoid this). The character using the power can cancel the attraction on anything that is within one meter of him.

If his power is not under control, he can't stop anything at all and could well end up being crushed by everything that he has 'fallen' toward him. In this case, not only will he suffer damage from the objects that have hit him, but on top of that, the Damage Base is increased by 1 point for each Combat Round because of crushing damage.

Jamming

Penalty:
-3 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
50 meters in diameter +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates disruptions that jam all the detection and transmission devices in a sphere centered on the character, inflicting a penalty on them.

Lightning

Physical damage:
2D10+3 +/- Success Modifier (1 Location hit, randomly determined on the Ranged Attacks Location Table, page 228).
EMP attack:
the penalty on the Breakdown Test is equal to -3, minus the Success Modifier.
Max. range:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect (accidental release):
5 meters in diameter + Failure Modifier

This power releases a lightning bolt that inflicts physical damages to a target. If it is an electronic device, it is submitted to an EMP attack ("electromagnetic pulse") that imposes a Breakdown Test (see the **Gear** chapter in CRB2, page 8). Armors and protections are usually effective against this power.

If the power is not controlled, the attack affects everything that is located in the Area of Effect, including the character.

Mental Imprisonment

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

The effect of this power targets the minds of everything that is inside a sphere around the character. The power is set loose instantly but its effects can linger for a period of time. The victim must perform a Willpower Test opposed to the intensity of the phenomenon. If the victim obtains the higher Success Margin (or if it's a draw), nothing happens. If the victim fails, his spirit is held prisoner in the Flux for a number of Combat Rounds equal to the Phenomenon's Success Margin. Worse still, at the end of the imprisonment time, the Opposed Test must be taken again, but the intensity of the phenomenon is reduced by 1 point. When a character is a victim of this power, his mind is trapped inside his own body. He can no longer perceive the environment around him and cannot control his organism. His body is motionless for as long as he remains under the influence of his mental prison.

If this power is not under control, it will also affect the one who let it loose.

Mind Control

Intensity of the phenomenon:
10 +/- Success Modifier.
Max. range:
50 meters +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).
Area of Effect (accidental release):
1 meter per level of intensity of the phenomenon (use the Failure Modifier).

This complex power, which acts upon the victim's mind, has three different uses: mind neutralization, mind control, and mental influence. In all cases, the victim's Willpower is opposed to the intensity of the phenomenon. Using this power requires complete concentration.

Mind neutralization: the character using this power quite simply tries to stop the mental activity of his victim. The

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victim must perform a successful Willpower Test opposed to the intensity of the Polaris Effect. In the case of a Success, the victim decreases the intensity of the phenomenon by a number of points equal to his Success Modifier. The character using the power can keep on attacking him if he wishes to (with reduced intensity though—otherwise he will have to activate the power again). In the case of a Failure, the victim is neutralized: he just stands there in a complete stupor, doing nothing, and not understanding what is happening around him. The phenomenon lasts a number of Combat Rounds equal to the Target's Failure Modifier.

Mind control: You must first *neutralize* a target before you can exercise control. The character can then force the victim to perform a Willpower Test again, opposed to the power intensity (note that it is possible that this intensity has been reduced before by the victim, during the neutralization phase). In the case of a Success, the victim decreases the intensity of the phenomenon by a number of points equal to his Success Modifier (but the character using this power can keep using it). In the case of a Failure, the character can take control of the victim's mind for a number of Combat Rounds equal to his target's Failure Margin, and give him simple orders.

Mind influence: this effect is a slow manipulation that allows the user to control an individual for a longer period, and more importantly, to alter his perception of reality. It can only be performed on a conscious subject. You have to concentrate near the victim for two hours to achieve 5 Points of intensity of the phenomenon. The victim must then perform a Willpower Test opposed to the intensity of the power. If he succeeds, he is aware of the manipulation attempt and immediately awakens. If, on the other hand, the control attempt is successful, the Player can distribute his Success Modifier between the duration of the domination (in days) and a temporary decrease of the victim's Willpower. As long as the Attribute Level is over 3, the victim can perform a Willpower Test (at its temporary level) opposed to the controller's Willpower to break free from the mental control each time he is forced to obey any order. He just needs to win the Opposed Test to free himself. Note that the victim only loses Willpower against the character using the power, and only during the control phase; this Attribute remains intact against any other opponent.

If during one of the Opposed Tests above, the character gets a Catastrophe, he suffers a penalty equal to his Failure Modifier on his Shock Resistance Test.

The involuntary release of this power creates a psychic sphere with a diameter equal to the intensity of the phenomenon, in meters. All those who are standing in that area (including the user of the power) suffer a devastating mental attack and must perform a Willpower Test opposed to the intensity of the phenomenon. The Success Modifier of this attack indicates the number of Willpower points lost by the victims. If their Willpower goes below 3, they are put into a deep cataleptic state from which it is very hard to emerge (treat this like a deep coma, see **Shock** in the **States of Health** chapter, page 232). If their Willpower stays at 3 or above, it is possible to recover the lost points at the rate of 1 point per hour.

Molecular Barrier

Protection:
10 +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:
7 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

Area of Effect:
5 m² +/- Success Modifier.

Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
10 meters +/- Success Modifier.

This effect creates a molecular barrier capable of absorbing a certain amount of damage. Unlike Force Barrier, the molecular barrier can be damaged: its protection value is reduced by 1 point for every 5 damage points. The character who controls the phenomenon can choose to place the barrier wherever he sees fit, within the range limit of his power. Whether it appears on an individual or a structure has no consequence.

If the power is not controlled, the barrier can appear anywhere (roll on the chart for Grenade Shooting Errors, page 231), 1D10 meters away from the user.

Molecular Breakdown

Damage:
2D10 +/- Success Modifier (1 Location hit, determined randomly on the **Ranged Attacks Location Table**, page 228).

Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.

This terrifying power allows the user to disintegrate matter. The phenomenon inflicts physical damage to all living creatures present in the spherical Area of Effect. Beware! The wounds inflicted are permanent! A victim suffering a Serious Wound, for example, will have one of his Serious-Wound boxes permanently checked, and will not be able to recover from this Wound! Only a molecular Reintegrator (a Genetician machine) or the Molecular Regeneration power (see below) can heal him. Armors and protections are not effective against this power.

Even if the effect is not controlled, the character who is releasing the effect is not affected.

Molecular Disruption

Damage:
2D10 +/- Success Modifier (2 Locations hit, determined randomly on the **Ranged Attacks Location Table**, page 228).

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Area of Effect:

5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:

15 meters +/- Success Modifier.

This phenomenon inflicts physical damage to everything that is located in the spherical Area of Effect. This damage can be healed normally. Armors and protections are not effective against this power.

Molecular Healing

Note: the character can use this power on himself.

The character can heal physical wounds (Location by Location). The *Molecular healing* Test suffers the same penalties caused by the seriousness of the Wound as the *First aid* and *Medicine* Tests (see **Care and Healing** in the **States of Health** chapter, page 232). If the Test is successful, the healed Location **immediately** gets back a number of Wound boxes equal to the Success Modifier. This power can also be used to stabilize a Wound (the Wound stabilization penalties also apply). In the case of a Success, the Wound is tended but it will be imperative to treat it further or use the power again to continue healing.

If the power is not controlled, it is the equivalent of a Molecular Disruption.

Losing control

Molecular Regeneration

Area of Effect (accidental release):

5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

This power allows the user to regenerate damaged tissue. The most common use of this power is for the healing of permanent damage (for example, due to a Molecular Breakdown or a Psychic Obliteration). In this case, the power is used as a normal healing power, but it can ONLY be used for the healing of permanent damage (see Molecular Healing or Psychic Healing).

This power is also able to slow the effects of aging. Once a year, the user can try to neutralize the aging of the previous year. If he succeeds in his *Molecular Regeneration* Test, his body won't have aged; if he fails, he will age normally; if he obtains a Critical Failure, he will age one extra year. The Test is, however given a penalty equal to the age of the character divided by 5 (-7 if he is 35 years old, for example).

The uncontrolled release of this power can have devastating effects. Indeed, the waves of energy that emit from the user can either be blue in color (in this case, everything's fine—the characters receive a normal regeneration), or reddish (and in that case, something is wrong). In the second case, any person and anything inside the Area of Effect will suffer the equivalent of a Molecular Breakdown (the bonus for Damage is equal to the Failure Modifier of the person who caused the Polaris incident), which creates permanent Wounds.

Nightmare

Intensity of the phenomenon:

12 +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:

5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

Area of Effect:

10 meters in diameter +/- (2 m x Success Modifier).

Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:

50 meters +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).

This power inflicts dreadful, nightmarish visions on any individual who is standing in the Phenomenon's Area of Effect. The victim must perform a Willpower Test against the intensity of the phenomenon. In the case of a Failure, he is terrified by these visions for the duration of the power and

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suffers a -10 penalty on all his Actions (on a Catastrophe, he may even receive a permanent phobia, to be randomly determined). The character controlling this power can move the Area of Effect.

Molecular Field

Protection:
10 +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
7 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

This effect creates a molecular field with a spherical shape, capable of absorbing a certain amount of damage. Unlike Force Field, a molecular field can be damaged: its protection value is reduced by 1 Point for every 5 damage points. The protection sphere moves with the character.

Organic Repulsion Sphere

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a sphere around the character who is using it, preventing any organic elements from coming near him. Any organic creature that tries to penetrate the sphere must succeed in passing a Strength Test opposed to the phenomenon's intensity. If it succeeds its Test, it can move toward the character a maximum distance equal to its Success Modifier in meters. Any organic creature inside the sphere at the moment when the power is used is not affected.

If the power is not under control, any organic creature situated between the user and the limits of the Area of Effect will be violently thrown out of the sphere (treat this like a fall). If an organic creature is hindered by an object that prevents it from leaving the Area of Effect, it will suffer 2D10 Physical Damage Points per Combat Round due to the crushing force.

Pacification/Enragement

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

The user of this power can change the state of mind of a target, either to calm him down or to drive him blind with rage (choose one). Everyone in the Area of Effect (except the one who released the power) must perform a Willpower Test opposed to the intensity of the phenomenon. In the case of a Failure, the user of the power chooses the effect the power has on them. This power cannot be moved and is always centered on the one who released it (who is not affected). A calm target is unable to fight and calms down instantly even if he is attacked (he only tries to defend himself). An enraged character attacks the closest target, even if it is a friend.

If the power is not controlled, each potential target is either calmed down (1–5 on 1D10) or enraged (6–10 on 1D10).

Physical Vortex

Intensity of the phenomenon:
10 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Max. Range from center of Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

The Physical Vortex is identical to the Psychic Vortex, except that it sucks in matter. Living beings can try to resist it by carrying out a Strength Test opposed to the intensity of the phenomenon. If a potential victim obtains the higher Success Margin, he can move forward a number of meters equal to his Success Modifier. If the Vortex obtained the higher Success Margin, the victim is pulled toward the tear, over a number of meters equal to the phenomenon's Success Modifier. If a victim hangs on to something, you should subtract the character's Strength from the intensity of the phenomenon before performing the Test as described above. However, if the victim wins the Opposed Test, he can only move away by holding onto something, meter by meter. When it comes to objects and unconscious creatures, the Vortex is capable of moving 10 kg per intensity point.

Polaris Wave

Intensity of the phenomenon:
1 +/- Success Modifier.
Damage:
see Psychic Attack, Molecular Disruption, and Electromagnetic Pulse.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

The Polaris Wave is a most formidable power. It combines the effects of the Psychic Attack, Molecular Disruption, and Electromagnetic Pulse powers. Moreover, it projects anybody located in the spherical Area of Effect into the future or the past. The time jump is completely random. When the power ends, the wave reappears and sends the characters back to where they started, at the exact moment they disappeared.

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Even when he is controlling this effect, the one who releases it cannot move it. This power is necessarily centered on the character, who also suffers from the time travel (but not the other effects). The characters are transported either into the future (1–5 on 1D10), or into the past (6–10 on 1D10). To determine the distance of the time jump, roll 2D10 on the table below:

2–5 Intensity of the phenomenon, in hours.
6–10 Intensity of the phenomenon, in years.
11–14 Intensity of the phenomenon, in dozens of years.
15–17 Intensity of the phenomenon, in hundreds of years.
18–19 Intensity of the phenomenon, in thousands of years.
20 Intensity of the phenomenon, in millions of years.

The characters remain stuck in the future or in the past for an amount of time determined on the table below (this is the period flowing during the time jump in a past or future era, and not the time during which they are gone). Roll 2D10 to determine the duration of the trip:

2–5 Intensity of the phenomenon x 1D10 Combat Rounds.
6–10 Intensity of the phenomenon x 1D10 minutes.
11–14 Intensity of the phenomenon x 1D10 hours.
15–17 Intensity of the phenomenon x 1D10 days.
18–19 Intensity of the phenomenon x 1D10 weeks.
20 Intensity of the phenomenon x 1D10 months.

Premonition

This power gives the character the ability to foresee a near-future event. By focusing on an action, an individual, an event, a place, etc., he can perceive a very blurry vision of the future (in cases where the vision is involuntarily triggered, it is up to the GM to determine what will be the subject of the vision). A character who uses this power will find himself engulfed by the Polaris Effect, and his mind will be one with the ocean and the marine mammals. This phenomenon is an experience that is both wonderful and terribly worrying, in a universe where the sinister presence of "The Other," a mysterious being who haunts the Polaris Effect, is ever present.

Before carrying out the Test, the Player must choose a unit of time that will determine the Difficulty Modifier:

- Second: +0
- Combat Round: -3
- Minute: -5
- Hour: -7
- Days: -10

After the Test, the user of the power can foresee the future, up to a number of time units equivalent to his **Success Margin.** If this power is not controlled, roll 1D10 on the following table to obtain the range of the vision:

1–2 1D100 seconds
3–4 1D100 Rounds
5–6 1D100 minutes
7–8 1D100 hours
9–10 1D100 days

This power lasts for a number of Combat Rounds equal to half of the character's Mastery Level in the *Premonition* Skill. The use of this power mainly allows the character to feel impressions, feelings, or sensations, and not really precise images. So, he may perceive a vague impression of danger, rather than the precise nature of the danger. The further away the targeted period is in time, the blurrier will be the vision. However, the Player can choose to sacrifice a few points from his Success Margin to obtain more details; his character will then see a more precise vision, but he won't be able to see as far forward into the future. As a general rule of thumb, the Gamemaster can, for example, add a detail—while remaining pretty vague—for every 2 points the Player spends.

In the case of a Catastrophe (whether the power is triggered voluntarily or not) there is always a 1 in 20 chance (1 on a 1D20) that he will experience the future as a whole. This is usually a terrible experience for the unfortunate viewer, so much so that he must take an Intelligence Test. The Success Modifier of this roll will determine the number of Willpower and Intelligence points the character has **LOST**. Indeed, he will have been made completely aware of things that he has seen although he won't then be able to remember them. If the Intelligence Test is a Failure, the victim loses consciousness for 1D10 hours. His Intelligence and Willpower are reduced to 1 and will regenerate at a speed of 1 point every hour.

Last, but not least, a character who uses this power may have to face The Other (see **The Entities** in **The Polaris Flux** on page 265). The Other has one chance in 20 to intervene (1 on a 1D20). In this case, the character using the power will feel an absolutely terrifying presence. He will immediately be hit by a psychic attack, and he will have to succeed in passing a Willpower Test against a Willpower of 20. Temporarily reduce the loser's Willpower by the Opposed Test winner's Success Modifier. If the character wins the Opposed Test, he can disengage and regain consciousness without any other side effects. If not, the duel will continue through successive Opposed Tests. If the character's Willpower drops below 3, he will be taken prisoner by The Other. The Other can then choose to destroy him (perform another duel; the victim has another chance of regaining consciousness), hold him prisoner (the victim is placed in a coma), or manipulate him (the victim becomes dominated by The Other). The character can, once a day, perform a Willpower Test with a penalty of -20— however, the penalty drops by 1 point per week. A successful Test will allow him to break free from The Other's influence.

Psychic Attack

Penalty to the Shock Resistance Test:
+0 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

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Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.

This phenomenon forces living beings in the Area of Effect to perform a Shock Resistance Test. The Success Margin increases the penalty to the Shock Resistance Test. Victims can be *stunned* for 1D6 Combat Rounds or knocked *unconscious* for 1D6 minutes.

If this power is accidentally released, the character who caused the Polaris Incident is not affected.

Psychic Barrier

Bonus to the Shock Resistance Test:
+1 +/- Success Modifier.

Bonus in Willpower against mental attacks:
+0 +/- Success Modifier.

Area of Effect:
5 m² +/- Success Modifier.

Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
10 meters +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This effect creates a psychic barrier. The character who controls the phenomenon can choose to place the barrier wherever he sees fit, within the range limit of his power. The psychic barrier offers a bonus against Shock psychic attacks (such as Psychic Attack, Psychic Dagger, Or Psychic Bolts) and increases the Willpower of those who stand behind it against any mental attacks (such as Mind Control).

If the power is not controlled, the barrier can appear anywhere (roll on the chart for Grenade Shooting Errors. Page 231), 1D10 meters away from the user. Whether it appears on an individual or a structure has no consequence.

Psychic Bolts

Number of psychic bolts:
1 + Success Modifier.

Penalty to the Shock Resistance Test :
Usual Test for the first bolt, then -2 per extra bolt. It is possible to spread the Psychic bolts in order to attack several opponents at once.

Range:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a number of psychic bolts that cause the victims to perform a Shock Resistance Test. If the power is controlled, the PC chooses his targets as long as he can see them. The attack Test is performed with the *Psychic bolts* Skill. Armors and protections are not effective against this power.

If the power is not controlled, the bolts randomly strike at 1D4 target(s) each Combat Round. An attack Test must be performed with a Skill Level of 10 + Success modifier.

Psychic Dagger

Penalty to the Shock Resistance Test: -
3 +/- Success Modifier

Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a psychic dagger that materializes at the end of the user's fist. The character must then use his *Hand-to-hand combat* Skill to hit his victim and force him to perform a Shock Resistance Test. The Success Margin increases the penalty to the Shock Resistance Test. Victims can be *stunned* for 1D6 Combat Rounds or rendered *unconscious* for 1D6 minutes.

If the power is not controlled, it releases *Psychic Bolts* (see page 261).

Psychic Field

Bonus to the Shock Resistance Test:
+1 +/- Success Modifier.

Bonus in Willpower against mental attacks:
+0 +/- Success Modifier.

Area of Effect:
5 m² +/- Success Modifier.

Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This effect surrounds a character and everything that is around him with a psychic field that offers a bonus against Shock psychic attacks (such as Psychic Attack, Psychic Dagger, Or Psychic Bolts) and increases the Willpower of those who stand behind it against any kind of mental attack (such as Mind Control). The protection sphere moves with the character.

Psychic Healing

Intensity of the phenomenon (elimination of hypnotic suggestions):
12 +/- Success Modifier.

Duration (cancellation of stress):
3 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

Note: the character can use this power on himself.

Thanks to this power, the character can cancel the effects of Shock (dizziness and unconsciousness). It is even possible to bring someone out of a coma (see **Shock** in the **States of Health** chapter, page 235) but the user of this power will suffer a -3 penalty if the target is in a light coma and a -5 penalty in the case of a deep coma. This effect is immediate.

A more complex use of this power makes it possible to remove from a target's mind all traces of hypnotic suggestion or mental domination (imposed, for example, by the power Mental Control). To do that, it is necessary that the intensity of the phenomenon be higher than the Willpower of the individual who implanted the hypnotic suggestion (in the case of hypnosis) or the intensity of the Mental Control. It is also necessary to spend time with the targeted character: 1 hour for 5 Points of the power intensity.

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Finally, this power can also be used to temporarily cancel the effects of stress, fear, panic, etc.

If the power is not controlled, it is the equivalent of a Psychic Attack.

Psychic Obliteration

Penalty to the Shock Resistance Test :
+0 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.
Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.

This power aims to destroy the target's conscience. Living beings located within the Area of Effect perform a Shock Resistance Test. The Success Margin increases the penalty on the Shock Resistance Test. Targets can be *dazed* for 2D6 Combat Rounds or rendered *unconscious* for 2D6 minutes. If they fall unconscious, the targets lose a number of Willpower points equal to the Failure Modifier obtained on the Shock Resistance Test. If their Willpower goes down below 3, they are put in a deep and almost permanent coma. Only a molecular Reintegrator (a Genetician machine) or the Molecular Regeneration power (see above) can cure them.

If the power is accidentally released, the character who unleashed the Polaris Incident is not affected.

Psychic Sensitivity

Area of Effect:
15 meters in diameter +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power allows the user to locate living beings within a certain radius. The character can carry out a Skill Test to find out whether or not he has detected a living being. The Test is modified by the difference between the Willpower Attribute of the user and the Willpower Attribute of the target. Furthermore, the user is given a bonus on all of his Perception Tests, equal to his Success Modifier.

If the power is not under control, it will interfere with all the perception modes of the people who are inside the detection radius (including the user), and they will suffer a penalty on all of their Actions, equal to the Failure Modifier.

Psychic Vortex

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Max. Range from center of Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

A Psychic Vortex is a tear in the fabric of reality that gives direct access to the universe of the Flux. When it is created, all of the living creatures in the Area of Effect of the Vortex must take a Willpower Test opposed to the phenomenon's intensity. If the victim obtains the higher Success Margin, he can try to escape from the danger zone. If not, the victim loses as many Willpower points as the Success Modifier obtained by the phenomenon. The victim can, however, still attempt to escape the dangerous area if his Willpower hasn't fallen to 3 or less. If he manages to escape, he gets all his Willpower points back. If the Willpower of a character falls to 3 or lower, his spirit is sucked into the Flux. The spirit is then lost for good, unless others decide to try and get it back (see **The Polaris Flux** on page 265).

If the effect isn't under control, the Vortex appears at 1D10 meters from the character in a random direction.

Psychic Shock Waves

Number of psychic shock waves:
1 + Success Modifier.
Shock damage (per shock wave):
3D10 +/- Success Modifier.

This power releases concentric psychic shock waves that spread out from the character and affect living beings. If the effect is controlled, the character releases a certain number of shock waves, each one inflicting Shock damage to living creatures. This damage is, however, reduced by 2 points per meter of distance from the character. Waves follow each other at an interval of 3 Initiative points. The effect moves with the character. No obstacle can block these waves.

If the effect is not controlled, the character must gain control by performing a successful *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test in order to stop the release of shock waves. The user does not suffer any damage himself.

Shock Waves

Number of shock waves:
1 + Success Modifier.
Damage (per shock waves):
2D10 +/- Success Modifier.

This power releases concentric shock waves that spread out from the character. These waves destroy everything in their path. If the effect is controlled, the character releases a certain number of shock waves, each one inflicting physical damage. This damage is, however, reduced by 2 points per meter of distance from the character. Waves follow each other at an interval of 3 Initiative points. The effect moves with the character. As long as it is not destroyed, an obstacle can block these waves.

If the effect is not controlled, the character must gain control by performing a successful *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Test in order to stop the release of shock waves. The user does not suffer any damage himself.

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Soul Eater

Maximum distance of appearance of the creature:
5 meters +/- Success Modifier.
Power of the creature:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power is similar to Flux Beast but it allows the user to call a soul eater. This creature is an immaterial, nightmarish creature that possesses a death threshold (30) and only one Attribute, Willpower, the level of which is equal to the intensity of the phenomenon. If the PC controls the power, he can give orders to the creature. The creature is only vulnerable to energy attacks. It always acts first and only attacks once per Combat Round. It moves at a speed equal to its Willpower in meters. When it attacks, it tries to devour the mind of its prey. This attack must be resolved by a Willpower Test opposed between the creature and its victim. If the creature wins, it absorbs a number of Willpower points equal to its Success Modifier. If there is a draw, or if the victim wins, nothing happens. If the victim's Willpower goes down to 0, he becomes nothing more than an empty shell. Otherwise, he will immediately gain all of his Willpower points back, once the creature is gone or destroyed. Destroying a soul eater releases an uncontrolled effect of Psychic Attack, at an intensity equal to the creature's Willpower.

If the PC does not control this power, the creature appears 1D10 meters away and attacks anything that moves.

Soundscan

Intensity of the phenomenon:
10 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
15 meters in diameter +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.

This power allows the user to locate and analyze several targets inside a certain area. The Player can perform a Test with a level equivalent to the intensity of the phenomenon. If he succeeds at the Test, he will locate the targets present in the area; his Success Margin indicates the precision with which they can be analyzed.

If the power is not under control, it will interfere with all the perception modes of the people who are inside the detection radius (including the user), and they will all suffer a penalty on all of their Actions, equal to the Failure Modifier.

Telekinesis

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect (accidental release):
5 meters in diameter +/- Failure Modifier.

This power allows the user to move objects with his thoughts. The character's "Telekinetic Strength" is equal to the phenomenon's intensity, and is comparable to the Strength Attribute of an individual. This potential can be used to move or lift objects, just as if it would be if it were the Strength Attribute of any other character. To perform an Attack with an object manipulated at a distance, the character will need to carry out a new *Telekinesis* Test. The

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same goes for any precision handling, but the GM is free to add penalties depending on the difficulty of the task (for example, using a firearm at a distance is deemed a precision handling). Any gear belonging to other characters that is not well attached can be snatched. The power can be used to snatch an object from a character's hands, but in this case, you must carry out an Opposed Test between the intensity of the phenomenon and the Strength of the character who is holding the object. A character can attempt to go beyond the limits of his telekinetic potential, but to do so, he must perform a Shock Resistance Test with a penalty equal to the number of points he is pushing above his usual level of Telekinetic Strength.

If the user cannot control it, this power can be devastating. Throughout the duration of the phenomenon, all the objects that are around the character inside the Area of Effect, and which have a weight that can be moved by a Strength Level equal to the intensity of the phenomenon, begin to fly all over the place. Any character who is inside the Area of Effect suffers between 1D10 and 3D10 Physical Damage Points. The victims can attempt to dodge the objects by taking Coordination Tests.

Teleportation

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.
Range:
30 meters +/- (10 m x Success Modifier).

This power allows the user to transport a character or an object with a weight equal to its strength (intensity of the phenomenon x 10 kg) that is inside the Area of Effect. The character in control of the phenomenon chooses the direction. A character who is teleported into an object or a wall will reappear next to it. However, it is perfectly possible to teleport somebody underwater.

If the effect is not under control, the direction is randomly determined by rolling 1D10 (1: up, 2: down, 3: east, 4: west, 5: north, 6: south, 7: northeast, 8: southeast, 9: southwest, 10: northwest).

Temporal Shift

Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.
Temporal shift:
2D6 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.
Max. Range from the center of the Area of Effect:
15 meters +/- Success Modifier.

The character and every living creature (as well as the gear they are carrying) located in the Area of Effect are transported to the future or the past. Those who suffer this effect reappear at the exact place they were before. If, for example, they were in a cruiser, they will reappear in the same cruiser, even if the ship has moved away from there.

When it is set to the future, the time travel does not cause any major problems. The character (and everything that is situated in the sphere) ceases to exist for a few Rounds before they reappear. However, it is impossible to do a jump later on to the past, to the time period during which he "did not exist." He will automatically reappear just before his jump into the future.

For a journey into the past, things are a little more complex. As a matter of fact, the character purely and simply cancels what has happened between the moment he activates his power and the moment he reappears in the past. As two same bodies cannot coexist in the same space-time, the character reenters his own body, at the place where he was in the past. If other characters are going with him, they too reenter their own bodies at the places where they were in the past. Transported objects go back to their initial position. If a character is transported dead to a moment when he was alive, he will not remember anything. The character will remember what happened in the future but things will not necessarily happen exactly the same way because nothing is written. The GM is encouraged to act so that the same events happen again, except for a few small details.

Time manipulation is dangerous and each jump can create a "temporal chimera." After each jump, you must roll 1D100 on the table below:

- **01–60. Nothing to report:** everything is fine.
- **61–90. Echoes from the past:** the character made a successful time jump but echoes of what has been and what should have been endure. If he has made a jump into the past, he will see a vague specter of himself act as he did before he made his jump. This chimera has no impact whatsoever on the new reality but it can prove extremely disturbing. This phenomenon can be seen by everyone.
- **91–92. Unique phenomenon:** roll on the Exceptional Phenomena Table.
- **93–94. Another dimension:** the character (and everything he carries) ends up in a parallel universe that is, most of the time, a horribly deformed and nightmarish reality (but it can also be an entirely different and peaceful reality). You will have to find a way to survive as long as the chimera is in effect. After this, everything will go back to normal.
- **95–96. Temporal difference:** for the duration of this chimera, time is out of phase. It runs differently for each thing. Some characters will be accelerated, others slowed down, one raindrop will take an infinite amount of time to fall whereas another drop will fall normally. For each object (important for the action in play) or character, and during each Combat Round, you have to roll a die. An even result indicates an acceleration

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(double the speed and the Actions of a character); an odd result indicates a slowing down (reduce by half). The chaos this phenomenon causes imposes a -5 Penalty on the Tests of each character.

- **97–98. Shift in the Flux:** the character succeeds at his jump but reappears at the Flux border.
- **99–100. Time laceration:** each character transported into the past or into the future gets younger (1–5) or older (6–10) by one year.

For a jump into the past, a temporal chimera lasts for the time separating the arrival in the past from the departure in the future. For a jump into the future, the chimera lasts a time period equal to the time jump separating the past from the future.

Temporal Sphere

Intensity of the phenomenon:
5 +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a sphere that isolates everything inside it from the outside world. In fact, time passes differently on the inside of the sphere than on the outside. It can move faster or slower, depending on the user's choice. Nothing can make it through the sphere's boundaries while the power is active. If time passes faster on the inside, the number of Combat Rounds that have passed on the inside of the sphere will be equal to the intensity of the phenomenon for each Round that passes on the outside. If time is passing more slowly on the inside of the sphere, the number of Combat Rounds that have passed on the outside of the sphere will be equal to the intensity of the phenomenon for each Round that passes on the inside. The duration of the effect is counted in the context of the slower of the two timelines. It is impossible to move with the sphere.

Terror Sphere

Intensity of the phenomenon:
12 +/- Success Modifier.
Duration:
5 Combat Rounds +/- Success Modifier.
Area of Effect:
5 meters in diameter +/- Success Modifier.

This power creates a sphere around the character who uses it, which forces any creature who enters it (both friend and foe) to pass a Willpower Test opposed to the intensity of the phenomenon. If the victim fails, he is terrorized for 1D10 Combat Rounds.

Whirlpool

Intensity of the phenomenon:
10 +/- Success Modifier.
Range:
100 meters +/- (100 m x Success Modifier).

This power creates a vortex (see the chapter about **The World Beneath the Waves** on page 70) of a size equal to the intensity of the phenomenon in meters. It is not centered on the character and appears in the same conditions as a regular vortex. A character who is in control of his power can move the center of the phenomenon. Warning! This power does not allow the user to control a vortex that has formed naturally.

THE POLARIS FLUX

In a report submitted to Demeter, the priest Thaddeus Thorn describes this dimension as a gigantic multicolor cyclone of palpitating energy. He also mentions the presence of things with indistinguishable shapes, which he supposes are the physical manifestations of the nightmares of living beings. He continues describing black and impenetrable areas, the mere sight of which can drive a human insane. Lastly, he mentions a central point to this dimension, which could be the psychic emanation of a thing that could, with its mental power alone, have created the Polaris Flux. The spectacle is breathtakingly beautiful, but also terribly distressing. The psychic presence of marine mammals and of the "living" oceans is constant.

ABOUT THE POLARIS FLUX

This section will give you a **very general** *overview of the Polaris Flux and the rules that govern it. A future supplement will be completely dedicated to this mysterious dimension; however, all the following information can be used as a source of inspiration for the GM who would like to develop this aspect of the game's universe.*

THE FLUX

Very little is known even now about the Polaris Flux. It would seem that it is a parallel dimension made up of psychic energy, but it's also a kind of intangible echo created by all things. The scientific research into it has, for example, proved that even a simple rock could create an echo in the Polaris Flux, which would tend to demonstrate that it is not only made up of psychic energy but also of waves, radiation, and everything else that belongs in the world of the immaterial and the invisible. Some researchers postulate that it is an abnormal vibration of reality.

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The thing that causes a tremendous amount of concern among the scientific community and the priests of the Trident is that the Flux is becoming more and more permeable, and on occasion both realities have coexisted. The witness accounts of physical "penetration" around the Flux have become more frequent, and some biologists have recently discovered a new species of moray eel that may not be entirely made of matter. It is only a short step from that to thinking that it's a creature escaped from the Flux.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE FLUX

Diving into the Flux is a troubling experience. The laws of physics inside it are completely nonexistent. The real world fades away into a chaotic universe made of matter that is more or less consistent. Some creatures emit echoes that are easily identifiable from the Flux, while others remain completely invisible. The environment is always unstable and you can come across floating land, which can instantly change into masses of radiating energy. You can also come across great infinite plains illuminated by (psychic?) energy storms, and then suddenly find yourself floating over a complete void. It is, in theory, possible to establish a rough map of some of the "regions" of the Flux, but until now, nobody has managed to do so. Some areas are, however, well known.

THE BORDER

If we are to believe the recent reports from explorers on the Surface, a kind of overlay of our own reality and that of the Flux has been observed. The explorers have described what has been named The Border—a vast grey wasteland, deserted and disturbing, like a kind of mirage. The descriptions are very vague, as the witnesses have trouble explaining the overlay of the two realities.

THE CITADEL

Some explorers of the Flux have mentioned time and again the existence of the 'Citadel,' which is some sort of black mountain that never changes and that inspires a great amount of terror. The mountain, which has apparently been sculpted into what looks like a medieval prison of gigantic proportions, is always found in a dark region of the Flux, a region that is constantly battered by incredibly powerful psychic storms. It is said that it is guarded by terrifying Flux creatures and that you can hear the wailing of thousands of imprisoned souls.

THE MAELSTROM

The Maelstrom is a gigantic whirlpool that inexorably sucks reckless travelers into nothingness. No sane living creature would go anywhere near it, but the sight of the phenomenon when observed from a safe distance is said to be absolutely stunning.

THE PSYCHIC LIGHTHOUSES

These lighthouses are kinds of havens of peace that can be found dotted all over the Flux. Their origin is most mysterious but it is said that the most powerful priests of the Trident are capable of creating them. None of the Flux creatures or destructive phenomenon can affect those who are sheltered inside a lighthouse.

PSYCHIC STORMS

Psychic storms occur in a completely unpredictable way. Their effects can be dramatic, and even, in the case of the most powerful ones, affect the real universe by creating a tear in the Flux.

THE PSYCHIC ABYSS

The Psychic Abyss is a bottomless pit that can be found in a very strange region of the Flux. In this area, everything is calm; one is never subject to any kind of disturbance, and the Flux creatures tend to avoid it. None who have dived into the pit have ever come out again.

THE ENTITIES

There are many entities that haunt the Polaris Flux. At present, only a few of them have been identified. Nobody knows if the inhabitants of the Flux are indigenous or if they are the echoes of truly real creatures or people. As it has been demonstrated that a traveler in the Flux can change his appearance, nothing proves that even the most monstrous creatures are not, in fact, the echoes of humans.

THE TRINITY

The Trinity is one of the most mysterious entities, and is central to the origin of the Cult of the Trident. In fact, it is because of The Trinity that it can be called a Cult and not simply an organization.

THE OTHER

The Other is a mysterious, omnipresent entity in the Polaris Flux. He is the main perpetrator of attacks against travelers in the Flux. It is said that he can take on several shapes, such as that of a black whirlpool, that of a dragon, or that of a young woman.

CONSCIENCE

Nothing much is known about this entity, but all of those who have travelled in the Flux have felt its dark presence.

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THE VEGETATION

All plants have a fairly powerful echo in the Polaris Flux, of which they are an essential element. The peculiarity of the vegetation in this dimension is that it takes on a completely different form than the one it has in the real world. Some plants take on the appearance of energetic entities of breathtaking beauty, while others transform themselves into grotesque, vaguely humanoid things.

RAINE

Some suggest that Raine is in fact a former priestess of the Cult of the Trident who has reached a level of consciousness inconceivable for most humans. She is supposed to have been driven mad by this state, and now haunts the Polaris Flux looking for spirits to torment or destroy.

SHADOW

Is it an independent entity? An incarnation of The Other? Raine's earthly alter ego? Shadow is a mystery. The only thing we know for certain about it is that some members of the Black Sun consider it to be completely independent from The Other and regard it to be their true master.

THE CORAL

The psychic power of the coral in the Polaris Flux is enormous. It is almost equivalent to the combined power of all the marine mammals put together. It has reached a point where the coral has claimed a whole region of the Flux for itself. Here it manifests itself as a gigantic luminous sphere hanging in the ether and around which thousands of energy-based creatures gravitate. Not much is known about these creatures. It is undeniable that the coral is vital to the balance of the Flux and that it is a fundamental element in its ecosystem.

THE MAMMALS

The mammals are one of the three main components of the Polaris Flux (along with the vegetation and the coral). They are omnipresent in the Flux, distinct energy flows that can take on a form very close to the shape they have in our reality, when they decide to dive into this other dimension.

THE LEVIATHANS

The psychic echo of a Leviathan never goes unnoticed in the Flux. It is powerful enough to disturb the Flux and create psychic storms.

PHYSICALLY DIVING INTO THE FLUX

A physical dive into the Flux is only possible through the existence of phenomena like the Physical Vortexes. The perception of an individual who physically dives into the Flux is very limited. He will see the environment around him as if through a layer of fog. He will feel like he is living a dream and has no possibility to act at all. He will be drifting in a totally alien universe over which he has no control. If nobody goes in to get him, he can remain a prisoner of the Flux forever, or reappear several years later. He could also become possessed by a Flux Beast or fall under the influence of The Other.

A character who is physically present in the Flux will retain his normal Attributes. His echo is said to be "passive." He can try to escape from this dimension by carrying out a Test with the Special Skill *Mastery of the Polaris Echo*. If he fails the Test, roll 1D10 on the following table:

1–2 **Flux Beast:** the character is attacked by a Flux Beast that will try to possess him. He has to successfully pass a Willpower Test opposed to the Willpower of the creature. If he succeeds, he reduces the creature's Willpower by the equivalent of his Success Modifier. If he fails, he temporarily loses a number of Willpower levels equivalent to the creature's Success Modifier. The duel continues until one of the two combatants' Attributes falls below 3. If the character loses, he becomes possessed and immediately reappears in the real world. If the creature loses, it is pushed away. See **Possession by a Flux Beast**, below.

3–8 **Wandering:** the character wanders through the Flux. He can try a new Test to escape again in 2D10 hours. If the result is a Critical Failure, the character can only try again in 2D10 days.

9 **The Other:** the character has attracted the attention of The Other (see the Premonition power).

10 **The Maelstrom:** the character is sucked in by the Maelstrom. He must successfully pass a Willpower Test opposed to the "Willpower" of the phenomenon, equal to 10 + 1D10, following the same procedure as the Flux Beast possession attempt above. If the character's Willpower falls below 3, he disappears forever. If the Maelstrom's Attribute falls below 3, the character is out of danger.

If the character succeeds, he usually reappears in the place where he was originally pulled into the Flux dimension.

MENTALLY DIVING INTO THE FLUX

When an individual voluntarily dives into the Flux, it is usually in spirit only, by passing a successful Test of the *Mastery of the Polaris Echo* Skill. His body sinks into a state of semi-consciousness. His echo is said to be "active," as it can perform actions in the Flux universe. Any character who projects his spirit into the Flux only retains the Attributes Intelligence, Willpower, and Presence. He also has a "Psychic Potential" that is equal to the sum of the level of these three Attributes.

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In the universe of the Flux, any Combat is a psychic confrontation. For each "Combat Round" the character can choose to attack, using the *Mastery of the Polaris Effect* Skill, or defend himself using the *Mind Shield* Skill. In both cases, you will need to carry out an Opposed Test against the Skill used by the opponent (unless both combatants choose to defend themselves; if so, then there is no confrontation during this Round). Note that there is no Reaction in the Polaris Flux; all attacks are simultaneous.

A character who attacks inflicts (1D6 + Success Modifier) Damage Points to his opponent, to be removed from the opponent's Psychic Potential. A character who is defending himself inflicts no damage, but he does receive a bonus of +5 on his Test. If a character's Psychic Potential is reduced to 0, his spirit is destroyed or he is possessed. All characters can recover 1 point of their Psychic Potential per hour of rest.

Once engaged in a psychic combat, a character cannot return directly back to reality. He must first escape his opponent. To do so, he must successfully carry out a *Mastery of the Polaris Echo* Test, opposed to the Willpower of his opponent. Once a character has disengaged, he can come back to his own reality.

RETRIEVING A PERSON OR SPIRIT FROM THE FLUX

To get a person back from the Flux once he has entered it, you will need to dive in yourself, either psychically, thanks to the *Mastery of the Polaris Echo* Skill, or physically. The Difficulty of retrieval (Test of *Mastery of the Polaris Echo* once again) depends on how long the lost character has spent in the Flux:

- Less than 1 minute: +0.
- Less than 10 minutes: -3.
- Less than 1 hour: -5.
- Less than 1 day: -10.
- Per additional day: -2.

As for the character lost in the Flux, he can perform a Willpower Test every 1D6 hours; his Success or Failure Modifier acts as a bonus or a penalty for the person who is looking for him.

POSSESSION BY A FLUX BEAST

Most Flux Beasts try to possess their victims in order to gain entrance to our reality. When their target is physically present in the Flux, there is a Willpower duel between the two (see **Physically Diving into the Flux**, above). When the target is mentally present, there is a psychic combat (see **Mentally Diving into the Flux**). If a Flux Beast possesses its prey, it forces the victim to return to reality to carry out a mysterious task there. To free a victim, you need to enter a combat with the Beast, either by diving into the Flux mentally to destroy it or by using the Hypnosis talent to carry out a duel (this should be managed like a Willpower duel). In this last case, if the Beast's Willpower score is reduced below 3, it is thrown out of its host.

Note: any mental attack aimed at the host character will in fact affect the Beast. If the Beast's spirit is neutralized in one way or another (due to a power of the Polaris Effect, for example), the host is freed.

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CHAPTER 3.5

EXPERIENCE

Experience, represented in the game in the form of "Experience Points" (XP), allows a character to evolve and improve his abilities. The way Experience Points are given out can, however, change from one group to another, depending on your game-playing style and the type of campaign you're running: whether you're managing the life of the characters over a long period of time or a series of scenarios spread out over time; whether it's a campaign that spans a long time with a lot of breaks or, alternately, it is a short and intense campaign; whether you're going for a realistic or a heroic atmosphere, etc.

Below, you will find several ways to manage experience and the way the characters evolve. They are rules that you can combine and adapt to best meet your needs, with all the necessary tips to do so. You can very easily move from one to another during a campaign, and even combine them. **The most important thing is to find a balance**, by using the instructions you will find below.

EVOLUTION OF THE CHARACTERS

GAINING EXPERIENCE

Before the game has even begun, the characters have already accumulated know-how, during their years of preliminary experience. However, at the time, they were not the main characters of the story, and as is the case for all common mortals, their progress was therefore fairly slow (but steady), at a speed of 10 Skill points per year of professional experience.

When the game begins, from the start of the first scenario, the characters are right in the heart of the action. Their progress is no longer constrained by reality, but takes place in a fun and heroic setting—that of the current campaign. In these rules, **experience is a way to measure how the characters become tougher as the campaign moves on.** Indeed, the form of the campaign doesn't really matter, whether it was designed to be a great saga following a core subject and a specific theme, or if it is only a series of scenarios that don't have any connection with each other.

Unlike other roleplaying games, experience in the Polaris RPG is not handed out as a variable, success-dependent 'reward' handed out at the conclusion of intrigues or missions. Instead,, we encourage the Gamemaster to use

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other kinds of rewards, which will have more direct and tangible effects on the game: giving out Luck Points (see **Luck** in the chapter on **Tests & Actions**, page 207), new Connections (Contacts, Allies, etc.), money, access to a number of rare elements of gear, and so on. Of course, this is only one point of view; there is nothing stopping you using Experience Points like everyone else! You are the only master on your own ship.

In the following rules, therefore, experience is considered to be a natural development process for the characters. It follows the evolution of the campaign, and it accompanies them as they move onwards through the fabric of the story, gradually making them more and more able to face more and more powerful opponents. After all, that's how all the great sagas work.

SPEED OF CHARACTER PROGRESSION

The distribution of Experience Points occurs at the end of each scenario or each of the episodes of a campaign. The speed at which the characters progress directly depends on the number of XP that are given out. So, how many should you give out? Well, first of all, everything depends on the length of the campaign:

- For a long campaign, with ten scenarios (or scenes) or more, it is best to go for a fairly slow evolution of your characters, rather than risk having them progress too quickly, and their abilities becoming rather unbalanced after a while. Consider a basic allocation of 1 to 3 points per scenario (roughly 6 to 8 hours of effective game-playing time, but that all depends on the group's playing style).
- For a less expansive campaign, the characters can progress at a somewhat faster pace. You can give out roughly 3 to 5 points per scenario.

As you can see, these are general guidelines: the number of XP given out at the end of a scenario can easily vary. You can always consider that a short scenario without much importance for the overall story line will only generate a (very) limited number of XP. On the other hand, a scenario that is crucial to the development of the story should be the perfect occasion to receive a larger number of XP. You should also bear in mind that the Gamemaster can decide that the group's PCs need to evolve at a faster pace, so that the campaign will become more heroic. In this case, it could be necessary to increase the suggested number of XP by one or two points.

As the Gamemaster can award Experience Points as she sees fit, she is the only one in control of the speed at which the characters evolve. This is a powerful and extremely flexible tool that you may have to learn to fully master. Therefore, you shouldn't hesitate to try things out, increasing or decreasing the Experience Points gained to test the way that the characters evolve in different situations.

PRACTICE, STUDY, TRAIN...

LEARNING PERIODS

Before you let the Players spend their Experience Points on improving their characters' various stats, it is definitely worth taking a moment to think about how a character actually improves his skills. Depending on how realistically she wants to play it, the Gamemaster can require the Player to justify and explain how his character has evolved. And, in the end, there are no short cuts; to improve a skill, you need to practice, study, and train, either alone or with a teacher. Translating this into game play will enhance the campaign's sense of realism.

If the Gamemaster considers that the character is not in a position to train properly, she can very well delay the spending of Experience Points or only authorize a limited expenditure. Training or studying takes time, for a start. This time is necessary for the character to be able to assimilate new knowledge and new know-how. The Experience Points gained by the characters will, therefore, mainly be used during the timeframe that takes place between scenarios. The slow points of a campaign (during which the characters are not in the middle of extraordinary adventures, as opposed to the "high points" that mainly make up the scenarios), such as long journeys, for example, are great times to manage training and experience.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Practicing a professional activity (or any activity on a professional level) on a **regular** basis (and for a certain amount of time) is one of the best ways to train. If the character has an opportunity to practice a Profession, he can improve on any Professional Skills that are indicated in the description of that Profession. Practicing a Profession on a regular basis requires being hired by a State, a company, a station, etc. The Gamemaster can always ask for the character to roll a Luck Test to see if he has been able to find a job. It can sometimes be physically impossible to practice a given Profession, for various reasons.

If the practiced activity matches a Profession that the character has worked in before, there is usually no problem with him continuing to do so. If the activity is completely new to the PC, he must be able to justify a credible reason for him changing his Profession. In many cases, a number of professional areas will be closed to him all the same (it would be difficult for a simple mercenary to find work as a diplomat, for instance). Remember that the prerequisites for access to a Profession are, of course, still valid.

The practiced activity can correspond to an existing Profession, but the Player can very well invent a new one.

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In this case, the GM and the Player will need to draw up a list of specific Skills that will be attached to this activity.

STUDYING OR TRAINING ALONE

Any character can also choose to train or study on his own. This is free of charge, but the character will need to be able to study or train in the right conditions, which means that he must own or rent any necessary equipment (you can't learn to pilot a vehicle without a vehicle), have access to the relevant documentation or information, and have a proper place to train or study. Once again, the GM is the only judge of the character's opportunities for training and studying, especially if he is also practicing a full-time Profession (in this case, the training can very well be limited to one or two Skills only, or it can take longer to achieve).

The GM may also decree that training or studying alone requires quite a bit of concentration and motivation. Before spending any Experience Points, the GM can ask the character to take a Willpower Test; depending on the result of the Test, the Player will be able to spend more or fewer XP.

STUDYING WITH A TEACHER

To develop new Skills, or to make progress more rapidly, it can be useful—often vital—to study the lessons of a teacher or to work with a trainer. The Gamemaster can even decide that in some cases, up until a certain level, it is mandatory to follow a training course and to have the presence of a teacher when improving Skills. For example, it is unthinkable for a character to be able to develop some Skills on his own: Skills that require training or higher education, such as the scientific or technical Skills, the martial arts, the piloting of ships, or the mastery of Polaris Effect powers, and so on.

Of course, following a course with a teacher can be expensive, and even horrendously expensive in some cases. The rarer or more prestigious the Skill, the higher the desired level of mastery will be, and the more expensive the tuition. The high stakes of acquiring knowledge are also a part of the world of the *Polaris RPG*; the GM is therefore perfectly justified in making the characters pay a high (but fair!) fee to do so. Of course, a teacher is not obliged to ask for money in exchange for his services; he can send the characters off on a mission for him or ask them for any kind of favor. All of this can prove to be a great starting point for future scenarios. Then again, finding the teacher in the first place can prove to be an adventure in itself

THE PASSING OF TIME

Even though they are the main characters in a story, the PCs are not necessarily going to go on an adventure every week, and between scenarios, they can continue to go about their usual business, getting on with their jobs, etc. All of this takes time. Therefore, time naturally ticks on by, and a campaign can span several months or even years in virtual time. For one reason or another, the GM can even choose to make time pass at a quicker pace artificially, for the needs of the scenario. Even though they are not "active," the characters can still gain at least a few points of experience during this time. If the GM decides to move time forward a whole year, she can even apply the rule about years of professional experience: the characters gain 10 Experience Points, 5 Professional Advantage Points, etc.

All of this means that the PCs also age during the campaign. If any of them turn 30, apply the rules for the effects of age outlined in the chapter about character creation (section **4. Prior Experience**, page 115).

IMPROVING A CHARACTER'S ABILITIES

IMPROVING A CHARACTER'S SKILLS

Experience Points can be used to develop a character's Skills. The costs in XP are similar to those for the creation of a character. As a reminder:

TARGET MASTERY LEVEL	COST PER LEVEL
-3 * to +0	1
+1 to +5	1
+6 to +10	2
+11	3
+12	5
+13	7
+14	9
+15	11
Etc.	+2/level

** Adding 1 point to the Base Level of a Skill with an "X" brings it to a level of -3.*

If she so wishes, the GM can choose to limit the development of new Levels of Mastery to avoid excesses and inconsistencies: up to a level of +5, the Players cannot increase a Skill by more than 2 levels at a time, and above +5, the maximum increase is of a single level at a time only.

Note on Natural Abilities above a level of 10: Attributes of Level 25, giving a character a Natural Ability of 6, can allow him to reach a Base Level higher than 10. In this case, the Global Level of the Skill remains limited to 25: the character simply doesn't need to develop his Level of Mastery all the

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way to +15, but he can make do with a +14 or even a +13 to reach the maximum Global Level of 25. Of course, the GM can decide to ignore this if she wants to allow the characters to reach a higher level in a heroically themed campaign.

IMPROVING A CHARACTER'S ATTRIBUTES

It is, of course, possible to improve a character's Attributes, but it is much more expensive. Each Attribute must be the subject of a specific training: muscular reinforcement to increase Strength, working on flexibility and balance for Coordination, mental exercises for Intelligence, psychological training for Willpower, etc. In general, this requires training with a teacher, but some Attributes can develop naturally over time, depending on the conditions in which the character has been evolving (he could, for example, develop his Presence in an environment with strong social pressure, or develop his Constitution by being submitted to harsh living conditions). The Gamemaster must decide this on a case-by-case basis.

Each Attribute can be improved by no more than 5 levels above its Base Value. No Attributes can, however, be increased over a level of 25. Here are the costs of each level increase:

INCREASE OF ATTRIBUTES	COST OF EACH INCREASE
+1	5 XP
+2	10 XP
+3	15 XP
+4	20 XP
+5	25 XP

As you can see, it's pretty expensive (note that all the levels must be bought one by one). Therefore, the highest bonuses are reserved for heroic campaigns, during which the characters can hope to acquire more Experience Points than they would otherwise.

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APPENDIX

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TEST DIFFICULTY MODIFIERS (PAGE 201)	
DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF THE ACTION	Difficulty Modifier
Extremely easy	+10
Very easy	+7
Easy	+5
Fairly easy	+3
Average	+0
Fairly difficult	-3
Difficult	-5
Very difficult	-7
Extremely difficult	-10
Almost impossible	-13
Superhuman	-15
Heroic	-20

MARGINS AND MODIFIERS FOR SUCCESS AND FAILURE (PAGE 202)				
MARGIN	Degree of Success	Success Modifier	Degree of Failure	Failure Modifier
1–2	Just barely	+0	Just barely	+0
3–4	Decent	+1	Mediocre	-1
5–6	Fairly good	+2	Fairly bad	-2
7–9	Good	+3	Bad	-3
10–12	Very good	+4	Very bad	-4
13–14	Excellent	+5	Terrible	-5
15–19	Perfect	+6	Catastrophic*	-6
20–24	Extraordinary	+7		-7
25–34	Heroic	+8		-8
35+	Legendary	+9		-9
* Risk of Catastrophe				

STRUCTURE OF A COMBAT ROUND (PAGE 217)

1. SURPRISE (IF NECESSARY)

If one or more of the participants are at risk of being surprised by their opponents (ambush, sudden attack, etc.), they must perform a Reaction Test, to see if they can act and, if so, how much. Characters who fail their Test in the first Combat Round will have a normal Initiative score again during the following Round. See the section about Surprise.

2. BASE INITIATIVE

Each Player works out the Base Initiative of his character, which is usually equal to his Reaction Level, unless it's affected by a specific bonus or penalty.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTENT AND CHANGES TO INITIATIVE

In an increasing order of Initiative (starting with the slowest character), each Player, including the GM for her NPCs, quickly but precisely declares the intentions of their character (to move, attack, etc.). If a Player's declared choice of action requires a change in the Initiative of his character, this takes effect immediately. The new value of Initiative is called his "Temporary Initiative," to set it apart from the Base Initiative (the one the character had at the beginning of the Round).

- **Multiple Attacks**: a Player who wishes his character to accomplish more than one Attack during the Combat Round must announce it at this point. He places the additional markers required on his Initiative Scale. See **Performing Multiple Attacks per Round** on page 218.
- **Matched Initiatives:** if several characters can act during the same Action Phase, and the actions are not considered to take place simultaneously, the Declarations of Intent must be made in an increasing order of Initiatives (the slowest declare their Action first, allowing those who are faster to react in response). See **Matched Initiatives** on page 213.
- **Hurrying an Action (optional)**: a Player can choose to hurry his character's Action. The character will gain a bonus of +3 to his Initiative, but his Action will be given a penalty because of his haste. See the optional rule **Hurrying an Action** in *CRB2*, page 194.
- **Delaying an Action**: a Player can decide to delay his character's Action. The character will act later in the Combat Round, during any of the remaining Action Phases. See **Delaying an Action** on page 218.
- **Preparation**: some Actions require a Preparation phase, in other words a gesture or a movement that will delay the Action itself (for example drawing a weapon or taking aim). See **Preparations** on page 216.
- **Choosing a Combat Mode (melee combat only):** at this point the Player can choose (or change) his character's Combat Mode. See the optional **Combat Modes** rule in *CRB2* page 195.
- **Modifications to Initiative**: certain events can change a character's Initiative. The new Initiative score is called his "Temporary Initiative" (in contrast to the Base Initiative, the one in place at the beginning of the Round).

3. RESOLVING THE ACTIONS

The declared Actions are then resolved in decreasing order of Initiative (the fastest goes first), during their respective Action Phases. Therefore, the character with the highest Initiative can act during the first Action Phase. The Players then perform the required Tests in turn (the Attack Tests, for example), then the GM announces the Action and its result. The higher the Success (or the Failure) Margin, the more spectacular the description of the action should be. (With the approval of the GM, an experienced Player can describe his character's Action himself!) The effects of the Action (the inflicted wounds, for example, and all the problems they may cause!) are applied immediately.

4. FATIGUE (IF NECESSARY; ADVANCED RULES ONLY)

If the GM is using the advanced rules for Fatigue, all the characters taking part in the combat perform an Endurance Test (*CRB2* 203).

5. END OF THE ROUND OR END OF THE COMBAT

After all the characters have used their Actions, start over at step 2 (initiative) or end the combat if applicable.

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INITIATIVE MODIFIERS

PREPARATION (PAGE 216)	Modifier Init.
Draw a weapon (ready to draw):	-3
Draw a weapon (not ready to draw):	-5
Pick up an object, within reach	-3
Pick up an object, a few steps away	-5 to -10
Move in close to be able to grab your opponent (see **Wrestling** in **Martial Arts** on page 225).	-3
Say a short sentence, give brief orders	-3
Observe the combat	1 piece of information for every 5 Init. points.
Attempt to locate an oject, a weapon, a person, a place, etc.	One Observation Test for every 5 Init. points
Use a simple mechanism (for example, flipping a switch, opening a door).	-3 to -5
Change the rate of fire of a firearm	-3
Shoot from cover	-3 to -5
MOVEMENT (PAGE 219)	
Crouch down / Stand up straight	-3
Short move	-3
Throw oneself onto the ground, dive	-5
Get up	-10
HURRYING AN ACTION (*CRB2* PAGE 194)	
Efects: +3 to Init. and -5 to Test	

SITUATION MODIFIERS (MELEE COMBAT) (PAGE 222)

SITUATION	Mod.
Being attacked from the flank (or from above/below, in underwater combats, for example)	-3
Being attacked while down	-5
Being attacked while in a vulnerable position (e.g. not having enough room to move freely or while trying to use a large weapon in a confined space)	-3 to -5
Attacking from an advantageous position (e.g. from a superior height, from a protected location, etc.).	+3
Using the non-primary hand	-5
Fighting on unstable terrain or while off balance	Actions are limited to what is allowed by his level in Acrobatics/Balance.
Fighting in poor light	-3 to -5

CATASTROPHES DURING COMBAT

Obtaining a Catastrophe during combat is never going to be good news. Here are a few examples of possible consequences, to add to the Failure of the attempted Action, just to spice things up a little (roll 1D10 and feel free to adapt these to the situation):

1. **Clumsiness: the character loses all his Actions for the following Round.**
2. **Unusable weapon:** the weapon falls to the ground (bladed weapons), jams (firearms), or breaks (low-quality weapons, but also bow or crossbow strings). The character could also lose his shield. Note: repairing a jammed firearm is a Complex Action that requires three Combat Rounds, and which requires a successful Test of the corresponding weaponry Skill.
3. **Wrong target:** the character hits a target other than the one he was aiming at (the closest one to him, whether it's an enemy or an ally).
4. **Oops!:** the character hurts himself with his own weapon (bladed weapons).
5. **Sitting duck:** the character has exposed himself a little too much; all his opponents get a bonus of +5 if they try to hit him.
6. **Confusion:** the character receives a penalty of -5 for all of his Actions during the next two Combat Rounds.
7. **Boom!:** an overload or the explosion of a battery or some ammo (this can even damage the weapon at the same time).
8. **System Failure.**
9. **Ow, my eye!:** the character is blinded for one Combat Round, for some reason or another (blood or sweat or even a bug gets in his eye or eyes, etc.).
10. **Off-balance:** the character stumbles or trips over an obstacle on the floor and falls over.

PENALTY DUE TO MOVEMENT (COMBINED ACTIONS) (PAGE 219)

TYPE OF ACTION	Speed			
	Slow	Mode-rate	Fast	Max.
Precision	-3	-5	-7	Action impossible
Balance	+0	-5	-10	Action impossible
Stealth	+0	-5	-10	Action impossible
Awareness	+0	-3	-5	-7

FIGHTING MULTIPLE ADVERSARIES (MELEE COMBAT) (PAGE 222)

OPPONENTS	PENALTY
2	-5
3	-7
4	-10

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RANGE MODIFIER (RANGED COMBAT) (PAGE 226)

DISTANCE	Modifier
Point Blank Range	+5
Short Range	+0
Medium Range	-5
Long Range	-10
Extreme Range	-15

SIZE OF TARGET MODIFIER (PAGE 226)

SIZE OF TARGET	Modifier
Tiny (around 30 cm)	-10
Very Small (around 50 cm)	-5
Small (around 1 m)	-3
Medium (human size)	+0
Large (around 3 m)	+3
Very Large (around 5 m)	+5
Enormous (around 7 m)	+10
Gigantic (10 m +)	+15

CIRCUMSTANCE MODIFIER (RANGED COMBAT) (PAGE 226)

SITUATION	Modifier
Moving target:	
• Moderate Speed	-3
• Fast Speed	-5
• Maximum Speed	-7
Moving shooter:	
• Slow Speed	-3
• Moderate Speed	-5
• Fast Speed	-7
• Maximum Speed	**no shooting allowed**
Target behind cover:	
• Partial (50% of the body covered)	-3
• Mostly behind cover (75% of the body covered)	-5
Darkness/Low visibility (or target obscured by smoke, gas, etc.):	
• light hindrance	-3
• Major	-5
• Total	**no shooting allowed***
**except for firing blind*	
Targeting a Specific Location	
• Body	-3
• Legs	-5
• Head/Arms	-7
• A very precise Hit Location (shoulder, stomach, hand, knee, etc.)	-7 to -10

RATE OF FIRE (PAGE 226-227)

SINGLE-SHOT	Effects
Snap Shot	**1 bullet shot:** no Penalty to Test
Rapid Fire	**2 bullets shot:** +1 to Test **3 bullets shot:** +2 to Test **4-6 bullets shot:** +3 to Test **7 bullets shot:** +4 to Test OR +4 to Test and +3 to damage (Short range only) OR +3 to Test and +3 to damage (Short range only) **10 bullets shot:** +5 to Test OR +4 to Test and +3 to damage (Short range only) OR +3 to Test and +6 to damage (Short range only)
Aimed Shot	**Delay Action:** +1 to Test for every -2 to Initiative (maximum +5 to Test)
AUTO_ FIRE	**Effects**
Short Burst	**3 bullets shot:** +3 to Test OR +5 to damage (Short range only)
Long Burst (Exclusive Action)	**5-20 bullets shot:** +2 to Test AND +2 to damage for every 5 bullets shot (Short range only)
Long Bursts against Multiple Targets (Exclusive Action)	**5-20 bullets shot:** One extra target (within 3m of previous) for every 5 shots (one Test per target, at +0 for Short range and -5 for Medium range)

HIT LOCATION TABLE (PAGE 228)

1D20	Distance	Contact (Optional)	1D20
1	Head	Head	1
2			2
3	Body		3
4			4
5		Body	5
6			6
7			7
8			8
9	Right Arm		9
10			10
11		Right Arm	11
12	Left Arm		12
13			13
14		Left Arm	14
15	Right Leg		15
16			16
17		Right Leg	17
18	Left leg		18
19		Left leg	19
20			20

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EFFECTS OF WOUNDS

LIGHT WOUNDS

Penalty for Test: -1 (**Worsening factors:** Overactivity).

Bruises, small cuts, first-degree burns on a small area.

MODERATE WOUNDS

Penalty for Tests: -3 **(Worsening factors:**Infection, overactivity)

Strained muscles, light sprains, deeper cuts that haven't hit any major blood vessels, second-degree burns (or first-degree burns over a large area)...

SERIOUS WOUNDS

Penalty for Test: -5 (**Worsening factors:**Infection, overactivity)

Effect: Legs: movement at a maximum of Moderate Speed. **Body:** movement at a maximum of Moderate Speed, Shock Test required (no penalties). **Head:** movement at a maximum of Moderate Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -5).

Torn muscles or tendons, serious sprains and dislocations, fractured bones, deep cuts that have damaged a medium-sized major blood vessel, second-degree burns over a wide area...

- **Aftereffects** (Head Wounds only) (*CRB2* page 201)

CRITICAL WOUNDS

Penalty for Test: -10 **(Worsening factors:**Infection, overactivity)

Effect: Arms: movement at a maximum of Moderate Speed, Shock Test required (no penalty). **Legs:** movement is impossible, Shock Test required (no penalty). **Body:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -5). **Head:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -10).

Bone fractures, severe ligament tears, fragments of bone that have pierced a vital organ or blood vessel, deep wounds with severe hemorrhaging, third-degree burns over a wide area, damaged (non-vital) organ...

- **Stabilization required!**
- **Aftereffects** (*CRB2* page 201)

MORTAL WOUNDS

Penalty for test (general penalty for Shock test): not applicable/no action (-15)

Effect: Arms: movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -5). **Legs:** movement is impossible, Shock Test required (penalty: -5). **Body:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -10). **Head:** movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -15).

- **Stabilization required!** Imminent death!
- **Aftereffects** (*CRB2* page 201)

SUDDEN DEATH

A body ripped to shreds, a head chopped off, the lungs, heart, or brain destroyed . . . at that level of damage, there's no hope left. The character dies immediately (General penalty for shock test: -30).

LIMB DESTROYED

Penalty for test (General penalty for Shock test): not applicable/no action (-30)

Effect: Arms: movement at a maximum of Slow Speed, Shock Test required (penalty: -10). **Legs:** movement is impossible, Shock Test required (penalty: -10).

The limb is ripped off or permanently destroyed (the character will be paralyzed and unable to use that limb any more). The character doesn't die immediately...

- **Stabilization required!** Imminent death!
- **Aftereffects** (*CRB2* page 201)

STUN, KNOCKOUT, AND CATASTROPHES

WOUND RECEIVED	LOCATION	STUN	KNOCKOUT	CATASTROPHE	SHOCK WEAPONS (STUN/KO)***
Light	Any location	-	-	-	1CR/1 minute
Moderate	Any location	-	-	-	1D6 CR/1D6 minutes
Serious	Head	2 CR*	2 minutes	1D6 minutes	2D6 CR/2D6 minutes
	Body	1 CR	1 minute	1 minute	
Critical	Head	3D6 CR	3D6 minutes	Light Coma	3D6 CR/3D6 minutes
	Body	2D6 CR	2D6 minutes	3D6 minutes	
	Arms/Legs	1D6 CR	1D6 minutes	2D6 minutes	
Mortal	Head	3D6 minutes	Light Coma **	Deep Coma **	4D6 CR/4D6 minutes
	Body	2D6 minutes	3D6 minutes	Stabilization required **	
	Arms/Legs	1D6 minutes	2D6 minutes	Stabilization required	
Limb Destroyed	Arms/Legs	2D6 minutes	3D6 minutes	Stabilization required	5D6 CR/5D6 minutes

** Combat Round* *** Special, see page 236* **** Any location*

HEALING DURATION AND NECESSARY CARE (PAGE 238)

WOUNDS	Healing Duration	Natural Healing?	Necessary Care	Difficulty	Constant care?
Light Wounds	1 day	Yes	None	-	No
Moderate Wounds	3 days	Yes	*Medicine* or *First aid*	+5	No
Serious Wounds	1 week	Yes	*Medicine* or *First aid*	+3	No
Critical Wounds	3 weeks	No	*Medicine*	+0	Yes
Mortal Wounds	5 weeks	No	*Surgery + Medicine*	Arm/Leg: -3 Body: -5 Head: -7	Yes
Limbs Destroyed	3 weeks	No	*Surgery + Medicine*	-3	Yes

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POSTFACE

I first discovered the *Polaris RPG* when the second edition had just been released. I immediately fell under its spell. This game was instilled with a powerfully compelling spirit, especially for a world of science fiction. I think it's because of the fact that the *Polaris RPG* plays on some very well-known references, while at the same time putting them into a totally original context. Indeed, you will find a little bit of everything in the *Polaris RPG*. The main themes remain close to those of classic space-based science fiction, yet they are also given a handsome sprinkling of elements from things like cyberpunk, dystopian, and post-apocalyptic atmospheres.

Above all, however, the great originality of the theme is that all of this takes place in a world that has become intensely hostile to humankind. Of course, there is the world on the Surface with all its horrors, but the world beneath the waves is not exactly a cakewalk either. When playing a science fiction game based in space, you would obviously be aware that you shouldn't open a door into the void. The action of the *Polaris RPG* plays out under the water, down at hundreds if not thousands of meters below the surface. The pressure down there is unbelievable, the darkness is everywhere, the cold is chilling . . . so many things that can become far more threatening and suffocating than the "simple" void of space. Open the airlock into interstellar space and a whole bunch of fun things start happening, like loads of little objects that start flying around all over the place. Open an airlock at 5,000 meters below the sea's surface . . . and no one is going to laugh, because that's how much danger and death seem tragically unavoidable.

All of those things are great for the atmosphere, and they blend in well with the rough, tough, and no-nonsense side of *Polaris RPG*. And yet, this game isn't just limited to stories about ships lost below the seas. Philippe Tessier has found a way to build a rich and multi-faceted world to explore. When the first two editions of the game were released, people noticed immediately that: *Polaris RPG* has a fabulous potential for adventure, and it integrates everything that makes the charm of a great roleplaying game: action, exploration, espionage, intrigue . . . and, of course, that all-important dose of inexplicable mystery and fantasy.

That is the great potential that convinced **Black Book Editions** to bring the game back into print. Philippe had long ago agreed that it should be brought back to life (hey, nobody likes to see their work die off!), although he didn't really have a precise idea of what to do to get there. Luckily enough, there were several die-hard fans of the game working for Black Book, and so the decision was a quick one . . . Let's not beat about the bush, though; there were some serious obstacles still remaining: when it was first released, and even still today, the over-detailed and ultrarealistic game system of the first two editions of *Polaris RPG* had been shot down in flames. If there was to be a reboot of the game, it would need a new game system, one simpler and more intuitive to use.

Although I do agree with most people on this point, I have always believed that there was a lot to be salvaged from the old game play system, if only because it was designed to simulate a few very specific elements of the game's universe. The paradox of creating the new system was this: it had to be a far more accessible system . . . while remaining true to the atmosphere of a realistic and detailed sci-fi universe. It was not an easy undertaking, as it was hard to constantly resist the pull of wanting to make it more realistic, and at the same time finding a balance between simplicity and attention to detail.

From the very beginning, I wanted to develop a flexible system built on simple principles: levels out of 20, difficulty modifiers, and dice rolls that used modified values. In this way, most common situations can be resolved in an intuitive fashion. From there, you can choose the level of details that suits the styles of the Players around the table, mainly through the choice of which of the optional rules to use or not. Of course, there's no point in trying to please everyone, to attempt to please the GMs who love light rules and those who appreciate far more complex systems. That has long been a mission impossible in the world of roleplaying games. Often, it has therefore been a question of making precise design decisions (all of them arguable, of course), while providing alternatives to allow you to adapt the system to the needs of your individual group.

Here are a few quick comments on some of the rules in this game. First of all, credit where credit is due: the use of a D20 to resolve tests owes a lot to the game *Pendragon* by Greg Stafford. Having to roll your die under the level of difficulty, trying to obtain the highest possible score without going over, is an elegant and ingenious idea. In roleplaying games too we are but dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants . . .

Now, a few words about combats: The *Polaris RPG* takes part in a rough, violent, and dangerous world, and the combats needed to reflect that. The confrontations needed to be brutal and deadly, which explains a certain amount of precision in the management of Initiative and a certain amount of realism in the management of sustained damage that can be very, very painful. The damage management system is quite detailed and the aim of that is to make wounds more impressive than a simple loss of health points. The goal of all of this is to push the Players to be especially careful and—most of all—to get their tactics organized. At the same time, the use of the Luck rule can help limit the real losses: a dead character is not at all interesting for the game, whereas a wounded character can enrich the scenario . . .

The system for managing Damage on a ship follows the same principle: it's more interesting to play out the many incidents and the numerous breakdowns caused by the damage incurred, which will eventually lead to the ship being stranded on the seabed (or teetering on the brink of an abyssal trench . . .), than it is to simply limit the action to a vessel imploding and crushing all those inside it. I personally feel that any rule in a roleplaying game should contribute to the game's atmosphere.

It is with that conviction in mind that I designed the underwater combat system. This system was born with a double objective: to get the Player as involved as possible in its resolution (a trick that I have noticed to be especially useful in the game *Pavillon Noir*, but which also exists in other game systems), and to recreate around the table the atmosphere inside a submarine fighting blind. The spark of inspiration came from watching the movie *Das Boot* by Wolfgang Petersen: a submarine is fighting the enemy, but the point of view of the action is entirely filmed from within the cramped space of the vessel, as their target is quite often invisible. From this atmosphere came the organization of the naval combat Rounds depending on the responsibilities of each character, and the discarding of any precise notion of distance and/or position.

Enjoy your game,

— **Raphaël Bombayl**, summer 2008, updated winter 2014

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

CHARACTER SHEET

POLARIS™
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

CHARACTER NAME

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

HEIGHT: _____ WEIGHT: _____

COMPLEXION: _____ CORPULENCE: _____

HAIR: _____ EYES: _____

Right-handed ☐ *Left-handed* ☐ *Ambidextrous* ☐

DISTINCTIVE SIGNS: _____

ARCHETYPE: _____

GENETIC TYPE: _____

AGE: _____ GENDER: _____

FERTILITY: ☐ *Fertile* ☐ *Sterile*

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN: _____

SOCIAL ORIGINS: _____

INITIAL TRAINING: _____

HIGHER EDUCATION: _____

ATTRIBUTES	STR	CON	COO	ADA	PER	INT	WILL	PRE	LUCK
Base level									
Genetic Type Modifier									
Creation Points Modifier									
Current Level									
Natural Ability									

SKILLS	Attr.	Base	Mast.	Glob.
☐				
☐				
☐				

INITIATIVE / Base level = Reaction												
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25

SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES	
Shock • *Stun Threshold*	
• *Knockout Threshold*	
Melee Damage Modifier	
Reaction (ADA+PER)/2	
Damage Resistance	
Natural Resistance • *Drugs* (CON+WIL)/2	
• *Poisons, diseases & radiation* (CON)	
Apnea (CON+WIL)/2	

MOVEMENT	Slow Speed	Moderate Speed	Fast Speed	Maximum Speed
On the ground				
Underwater				

WEAPONS (MELEE)	Dam.	PEN	Shock	STR	Ini.	Reach	ITG
Barehanded	1D6+						

WEAPONS (RANGED)	Dam.	PEN	Shock	Range (+0/-5/-10/-15)	STR	Ini.	Rate of Fire (RoF)	Ammo. (cost)	Notes	ITG

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES,MUTATIONS AND POLARIS

GEAR AND NOTES

WOUNDS

STATES OF HEALTH AND PROTECTION

Localisation (melee)	1-4	5-10	11-13	14-16	17-18	19-20
Localisation (ranged)	1-2	3-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18-20

WOUNDS		Head	Body	Right Arm	Left Arm	Right Leg	Left Leg	Penalties
Light	(5)	☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	-1
Moderate	(10)	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	☐☐☐	-3
Serious	(15)	☐☐ -5	☐☐☐ +0	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	-5
Critical	(20)	☐☐ -10	☐☐ -5	☐☐ +0	☐☐ +0	☐☐ +0	☐☐ +0	-10
Mortal	(25)	☐ -15	☐☐ -10	☐☐ -5	☐ -5	☐ -5	☐ -5	Impossible action -15
Death/Limb Destroyed	(30)	Death	Death	☐ -10	☐ -10	☐ -10	☐ -10	Impossible action -30

PROTECTIONS	Protection	Shock	Location	Cat./Penalty

SUCCESS AND FAILURE MARGIN TABLE

Margin	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-9	10-12	13-14	15-19	20-24	25-34	35+
Modifier	+/- 0	+/-1	+/-2	+/-3	+/-4	+/-5	+/-6	+/-7	+/-8	+/-9

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THE WORLD OF THE DEEP -

ZONES OF INFLU

Evlen Riley Klawitter (Order #46797870)

NATIONS

ENCE, Year 568

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"HUMANKIND WAS BORN IN THE SEAS AND IS NOW COMING BACK HERE TO DIE."

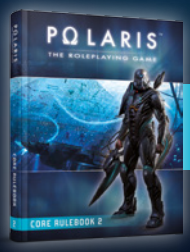
-Vulrick the Mad

For centuries, wars and climatic catastrophes have ravaged the surface of the earth, making it uninhabitable by all but the mutated and monstrous. Humanity, searching for refuge, combs the world's oceans and finds sanctuary... and more. Welcome to **POLARIS**!

In the distant future, a series of catastrophes befall Earth and ban all human life from the surface. People dwell at the bottom of the oceans, where human nations are torn by endless wars, harassed by looters and sea monsters, faced with a frightening drop of birth rate and one prevailing myster: the *Polaris Effect*.

Discover the post-apocalyptic underwater sci-fi world of the Polaris RPG™ by French author Philippe Tessier.

*This is the first of two Core Rulebooks and contains the **Setting Overview, Character Creation** and **Game System**.*



*You will need **Core Rulebook: 2** to play the **Polaris RPG™**.*

www.polaris-rpg.com

RECOMMENDED FOR AGES 16+

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